



2003

Preservation for the People: Seventy Years of American Youth Hostels

Elisabeth Dubin
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PRESERVATION FOR THE PEOPLE:
SEVENTY YEARS OF AMERICAN YOUTH HOSTELS

Elisabeth Dubin

A THESIS


in

Historic Preservation

Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

2003



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These were low-cost accommodations, simple and even austere, where boys and girls slept in separate dormitories but shared common cooking, eating, and conversational areas. They were supervised by houseparents, and the young people had a clearcut responsibility to keep the quarters clean and orderly.

The cost? About 25¢ per night.¹ It seemed a heaven-sent intervention to the Smiths, who soon arranged for their group to stay at the hostel at Hagen. And there they heard about the castle. Castle Altena, high on a hill above the world. That's where they were headed at this moment, and already this dismal trip was looking brighter.

Bacil B. Warren, *Young at Any Age*

¹ In 1933.

In 1944, British parachutists had shelled this lovely hostel, which stood on a high sand dune overlooking the town and was being used by the Germans as an observation post; it was grievously damaged. But after the war was over, one of the parachute lads came back with the International Working Party, so that he could say to his friends of the Dutch Youth Hostel Movement:

“In 1944, we destroyed your hostel, we could do no other. Now we have come to restore it.”

Oliver Coburn, *Youth Hostel Story*

To AYH

and those who strive to make something bright
from something empty

PRESERVATION FOR THE PEOPLE:
SEVENTY YEARS OF AMERICAN YOUTH HOSTELS

Elisabeth Dubin
2003

ABSTRACT

A “youth hostel” is an inexpensive, co-educational, supervised overnight lodging open to the public. Despite the moniker, hostels have accommodated travelers of any age since the inception of the movement in Germany at the turn of the twentieth century. In the early years hostel buildings were found in rural areas—they were created to allow city-bound students to spend a weekend in the natural landscape, and were invariably fashioned from unused school buildings or empty barns. When hostelling as a practice expanded from Europe to the United States in the 1930s, a national not-for-profit organization called American Youth Hostels (AYH) was formed to serve as the standard-setting and administrative center for the movement. The mission of AYH is, “...to help all, especially the young, gain a greater understanding of the world and its people through hostelling.”

This thesis investigates AYH to reveal the organization’s various approaches to preservation of adapted historic buildings. The primary question posed is this: as a not-for-profit, essentially philanthropic organization charging minimal fees for accommodations, how does AYH acquire and renovate historic buildings and why does it invariably choose this option over new construction? Three case studies present distinct building typologies, all adapted to dorm-style hostels: (1) a Victorian mansion in Sacramento, (2) a former nursing home in New York City, and (3) an obsolete lighthouse on the California coast. This paper also demonstrates that AYH values historic preservation as much as it does social reform and physical education.

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	v
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	viii
PREFACE	x
INTRODUCTION	xiii
Existing Research	xiii
Goals of the Study	xv
Categories of Inquiry	xvi
I. HISTORY OF THE HOSTELLING MOVEMENT	1
Origins in Germany	1
Youth Hostel Development throughout Europe	8
The International Work Party	11
The United States—the Beginnings of American Youth Hostels	16
II. CASE STUDY: THE LLEWELLYN WILLIAMS MANSION	24
Background	25
History of the Hostel	29
Building Description	35
Conclusions	47

III. CASE STUDY: THE ASSOCIATION RESIDENCE FOR RESPECTABLE AGED INDIGENT FEMALES	55
Background	57
History of the Hostel	63
Building Description	67
Conclusions	75
IV. CASE STUDY: PIGEON POINT LIGHT STATION STATE HISTORIC PARK	84
Background	86
History of the Hostel	93
Building Description	102
Conclusions	106
CONCLUSIONS	112
BIBLIOGRAPHY	117
INDEX	123

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Chapter I. History of the Hostelling Movement

1.	Burg Altena, the Castle at Altena, today.	5
2.	Burg Altena as it appeared before renovation, turn of the 19th century.	5
3.	The Houghton Mill in Huntingdonshire, England.	10
4.	Advertisement depicting the Houghton Mill Youth Hostel.	10
5.	International Work Party at Le Bez, near Briançon.	15
6.	Arnhem Youth Hostel in Holland, in the process of reconstruction.	15
7.	The first AYH Hostel at Northfield, Massachusetts.	18
8.	The Bowmansville Youth Hostel on the Pennsylvania Horse-Shoe Trail.	19

Chapter II. Case Study: The Llewellyn Williams Mansion

9, 10.	Sacramento International Hostel today.	26
11.	The section of Sacramento known as "Old Sacramento."	27
12.	Map of Downtown Sacramento, showing the hostel's four locations.	34
13.	Ground Floor, Sacramento International Hostel.	36
14.	First Floor.	37
15.	Second Floor.	38
16.	Attic.	39
17, 18.	Fireplaces with restored tiles.	40
19, 20.	New enclosure for open stair, reconstructed skylight.	42
21.	Renovation of the attic to accommodate dorm space.	43
22, 23.	The Llewellyn Williams mansion on its third move.	44
24, 25.	The mansion being placed on its new foundation.	45
26, 27.	House-moving apparatus; the final positioning of the house at its new location.	46
28.	The California Governor's Mansion.	50
29.	The Stanford-Lathrop Mansion.	50
30.	Plaque at the Sacramento International Hostel.	54

Chapter III. Case Study: The Association Residence for Respectable Aged Indigent Females

31.	The Former Association Residence, as it appears today.	58
32.	The Association Residence as it appeared in 1983, before renovation.	62
33, 34.	Basement level and street level plans.	68
35-37.	Rear Elevation, Front Elevation and Section showing schematic planning.	69
38, 39.	Original and current entrances.	72
40, 41.	Historic elements: mosaic floors and engaged capital.	79
42.	Corridor.	80
43.	Exposed brick arches.	80
44.	The Association Residence.	83

Chapter IV. Case Study: Pigeon Point Light Station State Historic Park

45.	Pigeon Point Light Station.	85
46, 47.	Historic views from two postcards dated 1910-1920.	88
48.	Closeup of the Fresnel lens.	90
49.	High wattage electric bulbs replaced earlier lamps.	90
50.	Fog Signal Building	92
51.	Damage to structural ironwork.	92
52.	Diagram of hostel possibilities on the California coast.	98
53.	Table of proposed pilot hostels.	101
54, 55.	Site plan of Pigeon Point.	103
56-58.	Plans for a simple renovation of the barracks into dorm space for the hostel.	104
59, 60.	The hostel today: tower and dormitories.	105
61.	The Lighthouse Inn with construction halted.	107
62.	Plaque commemorating the light station's designation as a California landmark.	111

PREFACE

I became interested in the phenomenon of the youth hostel while traveling abroad. In Europe young people from all over the world are accustomed to lodging in “hostels”, which typically accommodate travelers in dormitory-style bedrooms with common sitting areas and kitchens for meeting and socializing. In England, Ireland, Scotland, Switzerland, France, Italy, Israel and Greece I stayed in such hostels situated in buildings recycled and adapted from previous uses. I realized on my return to the U.S. that the hostel is alive and well in America, too. Like their counterparts in Europe, the majority of domestic hostels are located in historic buildings that have been used previously for other functions. My interest in these buildings was furthered after visiting hostels in California, Connecticut, Georgia, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania.

As I traveled I noticed that the adaptation of historic buildings for this use creates an architecture all its own. Those interested in developing youth hostels are aware that their clients are not patrons of four-star hotels; hostellers are frugal, adventurous, and tolerant of unusual living spaces. Small bathrooms under stairs, innovative shower designs made to fit tight spaces, variations on the bed-loft and a more liberal view towards privacy are all acceptable and, in fact, valued.

Hostels vary widely in form and quality but not in function. During the course of traveling and staying in youth hostels, I sensed the deep relationship between the hostel building itself and the traveler’s experience of an unfamiliar region. Hostelling, then, is not

simply the pursuit of “cheap sleeps”; rather, it is associated with a form of travel that intimately acquaints one with the history of a location as told through its built fabric.

I hypothesized that the hostel is a fitting use for certain “problem” historic buildings, e.g. obsolete prisons and school buildings that have outlived their original functions and are difficult to match with new ones. Hostel patrons are typically tolerant of a greater level of variation in service and accommodation than are general hotel patrons, so the act of remodeling a building for such a use can be more creatively accomplished. Buildings in locations somewhat off-the-beaten-path (like lighthouses, early farmsteads, or structures in national and state parks) would be under-visited as museums, yet as hostels they become popular destinations for bike tourists and car travelers.

I observed that hostelling fosters a sense of community and a feeling of good will among travelers. Those who stay in hostels often do small chores like cleaning a kitchen or vacuuming a common space; those who stay for an extended period sometimes get involved in more elaborate building maintenance tasks. This volunteer or barter-based labor force might be integrated into regular upkeep of hostel buildings, but appears as yet not to be implemented on any formal level.

Further, I noticed that the adaptation of various historic structures for use as hostels can be minimally damaging to the structure. This came to mind after visiting a former chapel where no partitions divided the space and dormitory beds were simply placed in rows in the main hall. In Littleton, Massachusetts, a former farmhouse and barn have been converted to a dormitory in which most hostellers sleep in the various gables of the building

and the rest in simply partitioned private rooms. I have seen similar hostels in carriage houses and industrial buildings where the impact on the original structure has been minimal.

Although hostel buildings vary in size and form, they are consistently compelling places. To stay in a hostel is not a neutral experience; one is rather forced to observe the structure and the particular details of the place. The study that follows is one that began years ago as a vacation and continued as a Master's Thesis at the University of Pennsylvania.

This project was made possible by the willingness of several individuals affiliated with AYH to speak to me about the topic. I offer great thanks to David Kalter, John Canon, Ta'Juanna Anderson, Eric Horowitz, Steve Haynes, and Jennifer Norris; I owe the largest debt of gratitude to Nina Janopaul whose input was essential. Thanks to Jim Garrison, Amanda Fernández, my mother and father, and all others who showed interest and helped to facilitate my work. I also thank my friends for trekking around with me to visit some of these places (hardly a joyless task for them, but the company was much appreciated). I would like to acknowledge the financial support of the Ilona English Travel Fellowship, and the time and patience of my advisor, John Milner, and reader, Samuel Y. Harris. Finally, thanks to D.C.F. Parker for inspiration.

INTRODUCTION

Around the world, a “youth hostel” is understood to be an inexpensive, dormitory-style accommodation for travelers who require neither the luxury nor the privacy of a typical hotel. Over the course of the twentieth century the youth hostel concept has developed from the early grass-roots efforts of a few German idealists to an organized worldwide network of lodgings offering consistent minimum standards of comfort and safety. Hostel systems have allowed youth not only to travel on a reduced budget, but also to meet other hostellers and establish friendships among strangers. This study shows that in the process of fostering travel opportunities for those of modest means, hostel developers have provided countless opportunities for historic preservation along the way.

Existing Research

That there is little in the way of detailed treatment of the history of hostelling is a lament echoed by those few who have undertaken the task since the inception of the movement. Those that have examined hostelling history as a rigorous academic topic have done so only in the years immediately following the importation of the idea to America. These include L.H. Weir in 1937 and both John Berry Biesanz and James O'Donald Mays in 1941. All three engaged the topic from a sociologist's point of view rather than from that of an architect or historian. An exception, Bacil B. Warren's *Young at Any Age: American Youth Hostels' First Fifty Years*, was written in 1985. Warren's entertaining narrative is immensely

detailed in every aspect of AYH history, yet the volume paints its author as an impassioned supporter of American hostelling rather than as an unbiased historian.

Nonetheless, enough information is available from several sources to track the history of the hostelling movement during the twentieth century. As a word of explanation, there has been disagreement as to the proper spelling of the terms “hosteler” versus “hosteller” and “hosteling” versus “hostelling.” Biesanz and Warren chose the former pair in their writings, while Weir impressively avoids use of all four of these spellings. Currently, the international federation to which most hostelling countries subscribe is called “Hostelling International” and adopts the two-l spelling, as do the American and British organizations. The Oxford English Dictionary offers some clarification; “hosteler” refers both to one who receives guests at an inn and to the student who lives in a hostel, while the term “hosteller” is used in conjunction with “youth-hostelling.” Since this study involves the American branch of Hostelling International, officially titled “Hostelling International—American Youth Hostels”, this paper uses the double-l spellings throughout. In addition, this study often abbreviates “Hostelling International—American Youth Hostels (HI-AYH)” to just “American Youth Hostels” or simply to “AYH.”²

² Use of the term AYH is also practical since the organization has operated under slightly different official titles since its inception. “American Youth Hostels” became “American Youth Hostels, Inc.,” and then “Hostelling International—American Youth Hostels”. During the writing of this thesis, the name changed yet again to “Hostelling International—USA” in January of 2003. Since the majority of the writing in this project references the organization as “AYH”, the abbreviation is used throughout despite the change to “HI-USA”.

Goals of the Study

To investigate theories put forth in the preface to this chapter, this study examines the hostel-as-adaptive-reuse by looking specifically at American Youth Hostels. AYH is a non-profit organization founded in 1934 that now licenses approximately 125 hostels in the U.S., most of which are considered to be “historic” structures. Each AYH building operated as a hostel under the umbrella organization has a unique story that begs the main question of this project: as a not-for-profit, essentially philanthropic organization charging minimal fees for its accommodations, how does AYH acquire and renovate historic American buildings and why does it invariably choose this option over new construction?

This study investigates AYH to clarify and define the organization’s various approaches to the conversion and maintenance of adapted historic buildings. AYH hostels operate in one of several ways: 1) the national organization may own and operate the hostel, 2) AYH may operate a hostel owned by a local group, federal or state park, or set of investors, 3) local councils, for example the Golden Gate Council discussed later in this paper, operate and own their own hostels under the umbrella of the national organization, or 4) AYH may license “network” hostels, which are typically smaller hostels owned and operated privately. So far as is possible, given that AYH is a large and fluid national organization with a less-than-static roster of affiliated hostels, this work attempts to view the individual structures as part of a single, unified organization with the understanding that the AYH philosophy and national standards affect decisions made for each building.

The project presents three AYH case studies in order to illuminate the organization’s methods of adapting historic buildings. Each study provides its own answer to the thesis

question: how is an organization that does not seek nor receive profit from development able to acquire and renovate historic buildings, and why does it choose to do so? This question is especially compelling given that a large percentage of hostel renovations take place in structures that have been long abandoned and/or were seriously derelict at some point, and which require extreme dedication and financial resources to revive them.

The case studies presented represent three different building typologies, all adapted to dorm-style hostels: the first, a Victorian mansion in Sacramento; the second, a former nursing home in New York City; and the third, a surplus lighthouse and U.S. Coast Guard station on the California coast. Together, the three examples provide a limited but revealing view of the organization's methods. This paper also demonstrates how AYH inherently values historic preservation though it is not codified as part of the organization's mission.

Categories of Inquiry

In addition to the general question posed, each case study addresses five categories of inquiry:

Site Appropriateness. Is the hostel well used? Does this location fill a need, i.e. does it provide access to places that travelers want to go? Are conditions at the site conducive to renovation as a hostel? If zoning and/or building code issues are present, are the problems surmountable?

Cultural and Educational Value. The mission of AYH is stated as, "...to help all, especially the young, gain a greater understanding of the world and its people through

hostelling.” Does the use of historic American buildings as hostels provide a unique window into American history for both foreign and domestic travelers?

Acquisition and Funding. Has the structure been saved from demolition or disrepair? Has AYH solved a “problem use” dilemma? Do there exist partnering organizations (not-for-profit or private) that can facilitate fundraising or use tax benefits to aid the renovation? Have federal, state or local governing agencies provided assistance?

Preservation Goals. Does the conversion preserve and rehabilitate elements of the hostel as they relate to a historic period? If not, what elements are valued and preserved? Was the restoration well performed? Is the structure in good shape and well maintained? Does the preservation community recognize AYH’s efforts?

Continuing Viability. Is this an economically sustainable project? Are there provisions for ongoing maintenance? Does this use have a negative or positive impact on the physical structure? Is the hostel financially self-supporting and, if not, what are the provisions for its continued operation in the future?

So many of the AYH historic hostels are worthy of discussion in this context. The three case studies presented here were chosen because they represent distinct building typologies with divergent methods of development. Of the roughly 125 hostels associated with AYH today, many of them are on the National Register of Historic Places, on local or state registers, or have won awards for excellence in Historic Preservation. Although discretion limits this scope to three studies, it would have been both possible and fruitful to do thirty more.

Chapter One

HISTORY OF THE HOSTELLING MOVEMENT

This chapter elaborates the development of the youth hostel as a phenomenon both abroad and in America. It establishes the historical context for the buildings in this study by examining the origins of the movement in Europe, the importation of hostelling to the United States in the 1930s, and the evolution of the organization American Youth Hostels from its inception to the present. The purpose of the chapter is both to educate the reader as to the nature of the youth hostel and to provide a framework for understanding the transmutations and current status of AYH as an organization.

Origins in Germany

Hostelling originated as part of a broader ideological movement in early twentieth-century Germany. In Berlin and Hamburg respectively, the two largest industrial German cities at the time, youth groups like the *Jugendbewegung* and the *Wandervögel* (“migratory birds”) shared a common appreciation of nature and a conviction that technological and societal progress brought with it certain danger to the human spirit.³ These two youth groups sought to reform all aspects of society—they typically rejected smoking, drinking, and the stiff and formal clothing of the time. The Wandervögel sought release from city-life by roaming the

³ Ilse Reicke, “The Youth Movement: Its Momentum Felt Fifty Years Later,” *American-German Review* 30, no. 1 (1963), 6.

countryside on foot to experience the restorative powers of nature and to regain a sense of love for the landscape of their homeland.

In this context, a young German schoolteacher named Richard Schirrmann lamented the conditions under which his students were living and learning. Born in Prussia in 1874, Schirrmann had moved to Westphalia at 27 and soon found himself teaching elementary school in a highly industrialized region of Germany. Heartily in agreement with the ideals of the Wandervögel, Schirrmann began to personally take his young students to the countryside on weekends, knowing that they had no other opportunity to leave the unwholesome and crowded city.⁴

During the middle part of that decade, Schirrmann continued to lead groups of students on long walks out of the city. His commitment to his ideals is evident in his writings:

“The world is in great need of... physical, mental, and spiritual excellence among young people of devotion to their country with an attitude of peace and love toward all neighboring lands. Nor can the wonders of God be fully appreciated from a speeding automobile. Really to experience this is possible only for one who is so content to depend on his own legs or his bicycle who contemplatively and devotedly responds to nature with all his senses and knows what it means to be drenched the whole day in sunshine and the breath of winds.”⁵

It discouraged Schirrmann that these forays were by necessity limited to the length of one day, since the groups had nowhere to accommodate them overnight. Occasionally his groups could find refuge for a night in an unused schoolroom or in the barn of an

⁴ James O'Donald Mays, “The Development of Youth Hostels in the United States” (M.S. Thesis, University of Georgia, 1941), 12.

⁵ Richard Schirrmann, “Where is the Man who Can Help?” (AYH Handbook, 1936), 7.

accommodating farmer. However, the risk of uncertain overnight lodging was prohibitive to long trips, given Schirrmann's responsibility for the health and safety of his charges.

"...every night there was the same anxious question, 'Where shall we sleep tonight?'. Haystacks and barns were gladly welcomed as bedrooms. These were kindly offered by the peasants and the boys did not even have to pay for them. But the nights sometimes were cold and only a bit of hay was in the barn..."⁶

In 1907, he put forth an idea to his school district in Altena, Germany. Schirrmann proposed that the Nette School, where he worked, put rooms unused over holidays to use as temporary shelters for coeducational groups of traveling students. His proposal was to arrange simple stuffed palettes for students to sleep on, boys in one room and girls in another, both rooms chaperoned by a teacher of the appropriate sex. After the holiday, the students and teachers would be required to remove the palettes, replace the school furniture as it had been, and leave early in the morning so as not to interfere with the school's routine.⁷

In the days of this early experiment in overnight accommodation for youth, Schirrmann received little support from his fellow teachers. Perhaps they frowned on the idea of girls and boys sleeping in the same building, even under the supervision of chaperones, or perhaps it was the thought of teachers fraternizing with students in this way that unsettled them. Nonetheless, Herr Schirrmann remained convinced that this concept was worth promoting; he proposed that not just one but many schools, an entire network, should be opened for the purpose of sheltering youth overnight. He wrote articles on the

⁶ Mays, 13.

⁷ Basil B. Warren, *Young at Any Age: American Youth Hostels' First Fifty Years* (Washington, DC: American Youth Hostels, 1985), 4-5.

topic, which were summarily rejected by educational journals. In 1910, however, he published these same ideas in the national press, dubbing these hostels *Jugendberbergen*.⁸

Although the teaching profession opposed the hostelling network, the general public approved. In fact, Schirrmann was a skilled promoter who was able to elicit financial gifts from wealthy patrons. By 1912, Schirrmann pushed his idea beyond the use of temporarily empty schools and advocated the creation of a system of lodgings permanently open to traveling groups. As the process of establishing his network of hostels gained supporters, he recognized another class of buildings in Germany (in addition to school-buildings) that were usually empty and for the most part unused. The German landscape was peppered with medieval castles, all hundreds of years old. Schirrmann and his slowly growing group of adherents realized that the questions, “Where shall we house the travelers?” and “What shall we do with our castles?” might be answered with a common solution.

The 12th century Castle Altena, near the Nette School where Schirrmann worked, was one such underused building. In 1912, the castle, which had previously functioned over the years as a courthouse, prison, home for invalids, poorhouse, hospital, historical society, museum, and even as a quarry, became home to the first permanent youth hostel in Germany (figures 1 and 2).

⁸ Warren, 7, and Mays, 14. The articles were published in *Kölnische Zeitung* and in *Monatsschrift für Deutsch Turnwesen*.



Figure 1. Burg Altena, the Castle at Altena, today. In 1912, the castle became the first permanent youth hostel in the world.



Figure 2. Burg Altena as it appeared before renovation around the turn of the 19th century. This image of the castle is from the *Universität Gesamthochschule Siegen*, where it was described as having badly deteriorated at the time this photograph was taken.

The Altena project converted a portion of the castle using a grant of the equivalent of \$200 U.S., and furnished it at a total cost of about \$2000.⁹ After this obsolete building became a youth hostel, many other historic castles in Germany were put to the same use as Schirrmann continued his crusade to establish a hostel network. (Although the first hostels may have been created as improvisations, Germany would later devote much attention to the regulation of architectural design and construction of hostels, both newly constructed and adapted. *Notes Concerning the Construction of Youth Hostels*, a publication of the 1930s, describes in excruciating detail every facet of hostel planning ranging from conceptual—“no flat roofs... it is un-German”—to practical—“be very careful about putting pumice between beams, it is very hygroscopic”).¹⁰

The early German hostel system initially had no organizing body, but as the concept gained popularity and more Jugendherbergen were founded, the need for one was realized. Schirrmann enlisted a friend, William Munker, to become the organizational and financial brains behind the so-called *Hauptausschuss für Jugendherbergen*, the national organization officially founded in 1913.¹¹ Munker was instrumental at this early time in the hostelling movement; several writings mention that while Schirrmann possessed the charisma of a spiritual leader, it was Munker who contributed real business knowledge to the endeavor. Munker provided advising, money, and even his own home as a hostel.¹²

⁹ Lebert H. Weir, *Europe at Play* (New York: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1937), 444.

¹⁰ “Notes Concerning the Construction of Youth Hostels”, reprinted in L.H. Weir (pp. 460-83) from the original “Die Baugestaltung der Jugendherbergen,” *Herausgegeben vom Reichsverband für Deutsche Jugendherbergen* (Berlin: Druck Wilhelm Limpert, 1934).

¹¹ Weir, 445.

¹² Mays, 16.

This was a period of tremendous idealism in spite of future trouble on the horizon. Munker and Schirrmann may have been aware, even before the rise of the Nazis to power in Germany, that there was a need to protect their fledgling network from domination or cooption by outside powers like religious and political factions. Although the First World War had seen many of the initial founders of other German youth groups killed in action, a second wave of youth groups continued in the spirit of the first. Youth movements in Germany were strong and active in the 1930s, which posed a potential threat to the coalescing Nazi agenda. The hostelling movement, however, was too popular to be wholly liquidated. Instead of fighting to destroy the national hostelling organization, by then called the *Verbund für Deutsche Jugendherbergen*, the Nazi Party subsumed all youth groups under National Socialism in 1933.¹³ Even as German hostellers were forced to join uniform-wearing propagandists called Hitler Youth under the new *Reichjugendführung*, or National Youth Leadership, Schirrmann remained optimistic. However, in April of that year, he was commanded to resign as Chairman of the Youth Hostels Association and take up an honorary position while the real leadership was transferred to Berlin. Reduced to a mere puppet, Schirrmann resigned from this position in 1936.¹⁴

Despite the Third Reich's attempt to exploit the rabid ideology of youth under National Socialism, the seeds of hostelling were sown during this period of reform-minded enthusiasm. Regrettable as the inter-war transformation of German hostelling was, the original ideals had already spread to other parts of Europe. Although there was no pointed effort made by the Germans to spread hostelling to other countries, visitors who had come

¹³ Biesanz, 81, and Reicke, 9.

¹⁴ Oliver Coburn, *The Youth Hostel Story* (London: National Council of Social Service, 1950), 149.

and experienced the idea exported it from its birthplace and the momentum of an international consciousness began to build.

Youth Hostel Development throughout Europe

In the decades before World War II, the hostelling movement spread and morphed throughout both Western and Eastern Europe. It failed to penetrate only those underdeveloped countries where roads were too poor for cycling, or where the middle class (the predominant users of hostels) accounted for too small a percentage of the populace, or where overpopulation, overcrowding, and pollution were non-issues. The idea in its basic form transcended most boundaries, yet each country did not adhere to the same rules and organizational styles. In fact, the various countries of Europe modified elements of the German model in response to unique social and cultural conditions in each nation. The hostelling mission was like a snowball; it rolled through Europe accreting layers of meaning that represented regional hopes for what the movement might accomplish. (When, in 1934, hostelling would be brought to America, its proponents consciously examined the range of European models in order to form a system suited to the United States.)

In Germany, as discussed, hostelling had begun as one of many manifestations of a broader set of political and social movements borne of unrest. Schirrmann spoke often on the importance of instilling in youth a love of country, and also on the value of maintaining hostelling as an egalitarian adventure open to both men and women and to people of all races. It was in Germany, before the Nazis came to power, that the inclusion of a “day room” or common room became codified as a critical space within the hostel where

travelers from many lands might meet and exchange ideas. Schirrmann thus infused his original mission, one that began as a primarily health-related concern, with an additional element of idealism—the hope that through international friendship lay the hope for world peace.

A comparison between the French and English systems illustrates how hostelling arose differently in ways specific to the conditions and culture of each nation. Both nations shared a common preference for a self-consciously international system over one oriented to domestic travelers. However, the growth of France's system was influenced by religious concerns that resulted in disunity within the hostelling network. Since the English/Welsh system was greater able to avoid this type of intrusion by such interests, it focused on mitigating the divisive effects of rigid British social stratification. The British YHA also emphasized preservation of the countryside and decried the construction of flimsy and unsightly new houses thereon.¹⁵ The reuse of England's existing structures was thought of as preferable to creation of new ones, especially outside of London (figures 3 and 4 illustrate an example of adaptive reuse of an obsolete mill in Huntingdonshire). The founders of American hostelling later considered elements of both the French and British systems as they attempted to bring this tradition across the Atlantic Ocean.

Other European countries added their own nuances of meaning. In 1929, the movement spread to Holland where hostelling was thought of as a way to relieve the tensions of a high unemployment rate by providing youth with an alternative to idleness.¹⁶

¹⁵ Biesanz, 142.

¹⁶ Mays, 88.



Figure 3. The Houghton Mill in Huntingdonshire, England. Although there has been a mill on this site for 1,000 years, the present structure was built in the 17th century after the previous mill had been destroyed by fire. In 1928, the mill ceased operation and was threatened with demolition when local citizens formed a committee to save it. It was converted to a Youth Hostel in 1934, and in 1939 was presented by local supporters to the (British) National Trust, who leased it to the Youth Hostel Association. In 1983, the YHA's lease expired and the mill was opened to the general public.



Figure 4. This undated advertisement for Player's Cigarettes depicts the Houghton Mill Youth Hostel as a backdrop for a cycling adventure. The reverse of the card reads: "Family Tandem With Side-Car—Thousands of cycling mothers and fathers became acquainted and enjoyed their courtship on 'a bicycle made for two.' And they do not forgo the pleasures of cycling after marriage. When the little one comes along, the happy couple wait only the passing of the baby-in-arms period before the addition of a side-car to the tandem makes possible healthy and enjoyable week-ending and holiday touring for the family trio. Many tandem side-car clubs have been formed and family rallies are held. Houghton Mill Youth Hostel in Huntingdonshire forms the background to this cycling scene."

Switzerland's system was similar to Germany's, but financing was dependent on gifts and the sale of membership passes. Poland's hostelling network was developed as a branch of the government in 1927, part of the Department of Education and grouped with physical education, "school hygiene", and tourist development.¹⁷ Poland was not the only country to adopt hostelling agencies under the jurisdiction of its Department of Education, but hostel leaders were generally against such practice after the loss of autonomy suffered by the German council. Czechoslovakia, before being annexed by Germany, added a requirement that high-school aged students participate in a minimum of 14 days hostelling, although the government did not directly control the hostel system.¹⁸ Harold Arnjot, the hostelling spiritual leader of Norway, developed hostels in Scandinavia as Schirrmann had done in Germany.¹⁹ By then, Denmark's system was rapidly growing as well.

The International Work Party

In 1938, with the number of European hostelling organizations growing rapidly, Finland made the twentieth nation to become involved.²⁰ Hope was high for associations in Italy, Greece, Egypt and Palestine. Youth hostels everywhere were open to people of any nationality. It was in this climate of burgeoning enthusiasm for hostelling, despite the threat of war, that the "International Work Party" was born.

The concept of the International Work Party began in France in 1935. Unlike wealthier national associations, such as Britain with its tremendous endowment from the

¹⁷ Warren, 15.

¹⁸ Lee Wahl, "How it Began," (AYH Knapsack, Fall, 1937), 9.

¹⁹ Wahl, 8.

²⁰ See map, Mays, 23.

Carnegie Trust, the Ligue Francaise was at this time largely without financial resources. In response, the Children's Country Holiday Association offered to the Ligue, rent free, a hunting lodge in the forest of Fontainebleau called the Chateau de Brolles. Jack Catchpool, former secretary of the British association and then president of the International Youth Hostel Federation, discussed re-conditioning the building with volunteer labor; he promised to bring over a group from England, and, with the French members combined, they would renovate the chateau. Master builder Walter Wilkes volunteered to lead the party of 30 Scots, Irish and Belgians, all of whom paid their own passage. The process of adapting the chateau to use as a hostel took ten days, after which they planted a "tree of international friendship" to celebrate the "Miracle of Bois-le-Roi."²¹ The British Youth Hostel Federation's newsletter, called *The Rucksack*, talked about the First International Work Party that year:

"There was something miraculous about it: not only in the sudden transformation of the Chateau de Brolles from a damp, dirty, dismantled house, which had been empty for twenty years, into a bright attractive Youth Hostel; but still more in the sudden friendship that sprang up, so real and deep, among the young people of different countries who did this work together."²²

In 1937, in what became the Second International Work Party, a party of thirty English youth brought their volunteer labor to Denmark in the same spirit. Four groups came, each staying two weeks, and worked under the leadership of a teacher from the Danish Rambling Guild. In this case, a new hostel was erected on the island of Als as an L-shaped extension of an older hostel. In the field of adaptive use, Denmark seemed well able

²¹ Coburn, 153.

²² YHA *Rucksack*, 1935.

to utilize volunteer labor—in Copenhagen, a former cavalry barracks was converted to a youth hostel, as was an old quarantine hospital in Odensee. In both cases, the hostel conversions were financed by the respective cities, “for whom the hostels meant an enrichment to the lives of their citizens.”²³

Ireland hosted the Third International Work Party in 1938. At Bunnaton, described as the most beautiful part of Donnegal on the shores of Lake Swilly, five Coast Guard houses that had been unoccupied for thirty years were cleaned and fully rehabilitated. A description of the tasks performed indicates that Work Party members were capable of hard work and could provide skilled labor under supervision:

“In many of the rooms it was necessary to take up the rotten floor boards and joists and float in new concrete floors. All sash lines and many broken windows had to be renewed. Two walls were knocked out, which made it possible to provide a large common room and a large dining room...”²⁴

Jack Catchpool offered to bring a party to Norway in 1939. In order to make a project at Mjølffjell happen, active hosteller Lektor Sigurd Stinessen appealed to the Norwegian Ministry of Education and to the B. & N. Shipping Line, who responded by making substantial grants towards the project. In these last months before World War II, about a hundred hostellers from twelve different nations came together at Mjølffjell to build a new hostel, with each room in the style of a different nation. Before the hostel was complete, however, the war intervened and the buildings were occupied by German troops.

The effects of World War II made hostelling on an international scale impossible; there was a general blackout of European hostelling during this time, and the International

²³ Coburn, 154.

²⁴ Coburn, 155-6.

Federation did not meet. When the war was over, reconstruction was accompanied by a rehabilitation of hostels and hostelling. In the summer of 1945, Catchpool visited Western Europe and in Holland found only seven out of seventy hostels functioning. Nine had been totally destroyed, the rest plundered. Fifty were reopened after the British YHA donated a large gift of mattresses.

European youth accepted the challenge of hostel rebuilding. The first post-war Work Party was at Le Bez, near Briançon, in France (figure 5). During the summer of 1946, four hundred members of the YHA joined international work parties in Norway, Holland, Luxembourg, France, and Italy (figure 6). The IYHF met again in 1946 at the Loch Lommond Hostel in Scotland, and reports there showed that much progress had been made in restoring devastated buildings and reconstituting dissolved organizations.²⁵ One hosteller related this story in reference to the Arnhem Hostel in Holland:

“In 1944 British parachutists had shelled this lovely hostel which stood on a high sand dune overlooking the town and was being used by the Germans as an observation post; it was grievously damaged. But after the war was over, one of the parachute lads came back with the International Working Party, so that he could say to his friends of the Dutch Youth Hostel Movement: ‘In 1944 we destroyed your hostel, we could do no other. Now we have come to restore it’.”²⁶

Many Americans, too, came over to Europe after the war to help reconstruct the countries that they had seen injured. By that time, Isabel and Monroe Smith had imported the hostelling movement to America as an organization called “American Youth Hostels, Inc.”, or “AYH.”

²⁵ Coburn, 167.

²⁶ Coburn, 173.



Figure 5. International Work Party at Le Bez, near Briançon (Weir).



Figure 6. Arnhem Youth Hostel in Holland, in the process of reconstruction (Weir).

After 1910, when Richard Schirrmann was finally able to publish his articles on the virtues of hostelling, the response was immediate as letters came in from all over Germany from other European countries. Still, the United States was geographically and spiritually isolated from the new movement. It wasn't until the early 1930s, while the almost all Americans had yet to even hear of "youth hostelling", that a young couple would grow to love the experience enough to attempt to import back home. Isabel and Monroe Smith, a Boy Scout leader and art teacher, became acquainted with hostels in Germany and visited Richard Schirrmann at his home in July 1933, where he suggested that they attend the international hostelling conference in Bad Godesberg to be held in October of that year. There, the couple learned about the various flavors of European hostelling and began to ask themselves logistical questions about bringing hostelling to the U.S.

"How do you set up the organization? What has worked in the past, and what has not? Is there really a need for youth hostels in the United States? Will the public support them? Will America's sophisticated young people want to use them?"²⁷

The Smiths studied European examples of organization and financing. Some organizations used private money in the form of donations, some depended more on the sale of membership passes, and some received state subsidy. Most of them were private entities, although some, like the Polish agency, were a branch of the government. The organization in Holland appealed to the Americans because it differed from the German model in that it was centralized but decidedly *not* state-run; the double-edged sword of governmental subsidy and government rule was now seen as a threat to the movement after

²⁷ Warren, 14.

the Nazis had completely taken over German hostelling.²⁸ The idea of a centralized national organization instead of a coalition of local groups was attractive in that it would preclude local authority and the local aberrations (like segregation) that might accompany it. Therefore, hostelling in America began in 1934 as “American Youth Hostels, Incorporated”, which had a small staff and central headquarters with no ties to government agencies.

On December 27, 1934, America opened its first hostel in Northfield, Massachusetts (figure 7). By 1935, thirty-five hostels existed in America, and by 1936 there were seventy-six. In 1937, loops of hostels were established in California and Michigan, and Pennsylvania opened a string of hostels on the Horse-Shoe trail (figure 8).²⁹ By 1940, twenty-five states had at least one youth hostel, with field workers and a publicity campaign passionately waged by the Smiths and their disciples.³⁰ This rapid growth rate for the first five years suggests that there was indeed a latent American interest in the hostelling idea and that the Smiths simply catalyzed the movement.

Although the demand was present, the path to a comprehensive network of American hostels was difficult. At this point in AYH history, all hostels but Northfield (owned by AYH) were privately owned and merely licensed and publicized by the national organization, so it was imperative to continue investigating ways of encouraging Americans to open hostels. AYH was consistently in debt in its infancy until Jack Catchpool visited the Smiths in and illuminated the benefits of attracting high-profile donors and advocates as the British YHF had. Catchpool used his influence to procure a \$2000 grant for AYH from

²⁸ Warren, 15, and Mays, 34.

²⁹ Carroll P. Moore, “Contributions in the field of Education made by the Youth Hostel Movement,” (M.S. Thesis, Massachusetts State College, 1937), 3.

³⁰ Mays, 40.



Figure 7. The first AYH Hostel at Northfield, Massachusetts. “It is a lovely old New England Town with a very wide main road, broad grass walks on either side and then the white houses. This one was old and rickety and the Smiths fixed it up and gave part of it and the barn for a Youth Hostel... there are two big lofts—one for boys and one for girls, with double and triple-decker bunks like crews’ quarters on a ship. Down below are washrooms and dining rooms and recreation rooms—dark beams and woodwork, rustic furniture, red candles, and red and blue stairs... this morning we were up early heaving straw mattresses around in the bunks and making up the beds... this is no place for sissies for those beds are *hard*.”³¹ (Warren)

³¹ Letter from Winifred Drake to her mother in the winter of 1935 (published with permission in Warren’s *Young at Any Age...*).



Figure 8. The Bowmansville Youth Hostel on the Pennsylvania Horse-Shoe Trail. The hostel was opened in the autumn of 1937 through the efforts of Henry N. Woolman, president of the Horse-Shoe Trails Club. It occupied one corner of a larger two-story stone structure, the oldest in the village, erected in 1820 by Samuel Bowman. Before it was forced to close temporarily after seventy years of service, it had been the oldest functioning hostel in the United States.

the Carnegie Corporation, and interested several prominent businesses and educational leaders in the cause of U.S. hostelling. After meeting Catchpool in Boston, Mrs. Helen Storror presented AYH with a donation of a building in Meredith, New Hampshire, which became the Clover Ridge Youth Hostel.³² Most importantly, Catchpool facilitated a meeting between the Smiths and President Franklin Roosevelt, where both he and Eleanor offered their support for hostelling and became honorary presidents of AYH. Roosevelt commented in 1938:

“I was brought up on this sort of thing and realize the need for it. From the time I was nine till my seventh birthday, I spent most of my holidays bicycling on the Continent; it is much the best education I ever had. The more you circulate on your travels, the better citizen you become, not only of your own country but of the whole world.”³³

Despite these advances, AYH continued to struggle financially and with national and international support for its cause. Moralists took issue with boys and girls sleeping under the same roof, wearing shorts, and skipping church to travel the countryside on weekends. Some held growing suspicion of the hostelling movement and its association with Germans, as well as its questionable communal principles, and wondered if AYH members were in fact Nazi sympathizers or communists. By writing to President Roosevelt in 1938 requesting support for a bill in Congress to grant free passports to AYH members, Monroe Smith drew the negative attention of members of the Washington bureaucracy who encouraged the president to reconsider his support for this small, vocal group. After a protracted investigation, the President and Eleanor Roosevelt officially withdrew their support for AYH in 1939, commenting that they’d rather not be associated with a group with which they

³² Coburn, 160-1.

³³ Quote by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Coburn, 145.

were not actively involved. The Carnegie Corporation declined to renew their grant to AYH after rumors of imprudent accounting practices circulated.

In addition, a sentiment was present within the international hostelling community that Americans were wishful thinkers—that “considering the country as a whole, hostelling seems to call for the creation of a new want rather than the satisfaction of a felt need.”³⁴ Some Europeans, and even some Americans who had experienced European hostelling, looked down their noses at the “abortive” American youth movement, stating that while the European movement was one borne of industrial and political oppression that fostered true youth solidarity, American hostelling boasted no such youth culture and was simply a glorified summer camp run by an autocratic central agency.³⁵ The Smiths were even criticized for trying to make a full-time career of hostelling (in typical American laissez-faire ideology) and for deriving profit from organized hostelling trips, a claim that does not bear out in fact. These criticisms and disappointments led to several attempts to comply with more rigorous accounting procedures and to an eventual decentralizing amendment to the AYH constitution in 1939.

It is now seventy years since Isabel and Monroe first attended the International Youth Hostel Conference in Godesburg in hopes of learning how to import hostelling to America. AYH has persevered as an organization despite countless changes in structure and leadership over the years, and although the majority of Americans do not use hostels, many have heard of them and are curious about them. Since the American movement did not develop under the same conditions as European hostelling did, it is clear that American

³⁴ Biesanz, 197.

³⁵ Biesanz, 200-9.

hostelling is its own phenomenon. Just as the nations of Europe chose elements of the movement that best suited the national youth culture and social structure there, the United States created a new type of hostelling unique to its borders. What, then, is American hostelling?

American hostelling is now a self-conscious pursuit. International travelers may use American hostels by habit, since they are so much a part of European backpacking practice, but Americans hostellers identify with hostelling out of desire to be a part of the hostelling community at large. Many hostellers are in fact middle or upper class, yet they choose to lodge communally in these facilities for less tangible reasons than cheap accommodations and a love of hiking in nature. American hostellers know that to stay in a hostel is to explore American history and culture, and to meet like-minded people.

The first motto of AYH was written:

“The purpose of American Youth Hostels, Inc., is to help all, especially the young people, to a greater knowledge, understanding and love of the world by providing for them Youth Hostels, bicycle trails and foot paths in America, and by assisting them in their travels here and abroad.”³⁶

Since then, the statement has been shortened, but the sentiment is the same. This thesis demonstrates that although this statement reflects the social idealism of the movement’s founders, there are other concerns that have gained equal prominence with the codified AYH mission. Although the concept of adaptive reuse of older buildings was not fashionable in the 1930s when compared with the desire for educational and social reform, times have changed—today, the virtues of the youth hostel could be as easily celebrated by

³⁶ American Youth Hostels Handbook (1936), 11.

champions of architectural reuse as by social reformers. Historic preservation is and has always been an unwritten mission of American Youth Hostels.

Chapter Two

CASE STUDY: THE LLEWELLYN WILLIAMS MANSION

The city of Sacramento in California is home to a particularly lavish and attractive hostel. One of several grand mansions within the AYH system, the structure has been restored with a great deal of concern for its historic fabric and for the urban context it occupies. Like many AYH hostels, this project was the product of serendipity—a match was made between a building in need of a new use and an organization looking for a needy building. In this case the city government was instrumental to the development of the hostel, in addition to the dedicated individuals with AYH who worked to make the conversion happen. The mansion has two histories—that of the house from 1885, when it was built, until the late twentieth century, and that of the house in its capacity as an American Youth Hostel. That the structure was moved three times only to rest, since earlier this year, at the site of its original construction is perhaps the most colorful part of these histories.³⁷

³⁷ The history of the Williams mansion described herein is synthesized from various sources including an oral interview with Steve Haynes, current manager of the Sacramento International Hostel, and from a handout printed by the hostel intended to inform visitors of the structure's history.

Background

The Sacramento International Hostel is located in the Llewellyn Williams Mansion at 925 “H” Street in Sacramento, California (figures 9, 10). The hostel occupies one of the few remaining stick-style, Italianate mansions in the downtown area. It compares in scale, grandeur and ornamented irregularity only to a small group of remaining homes, the former residences of Sacramento’s early politicians and successful merchants.

The Llewellyn Williams Mansion was constructed in 1885 by “Lew” Williams, a mid-nineteenth century immigrant to California. Intrigued by the possibilities of the Mother Lode, Williams had traveled by ship from Maine during the Gold Rush days and eventually became a prominent merchant and part-owner of the Pioneer Milling Company, located in the neighborhood now referred to as “Old Sacramento” (figure 11). Williams built the mansion for 16,000 dollars at the corner of 10th and “H” Streets alongside other stately homes on “Merchants’ Row” to house his family—a wife and daughter, both named Lucy. He commissioned two prominent, local architects of the day, Seth Babson and James Seadler, reputed designers of both the Stanford and Crocker Mansions and others of their size and elegance. In January of 1891, the local newspaper described the house as “one of the most elegant and comfortable of the recently built homes of the city.”³⁸

In 1891, upon Williams’ death, the president of Pioneer Milling Company, H.G. Smith, purchased the Williams family’s share of the company (including the house) for 30,000 dollars in gold. Smith held the property until 1906; by then, the neighborhood had

³⁸ *The Sacramento Bee* (January 1891).



Figures 9, 10. Sacramento International Hostel in 1895 (photograph of a historic photograph available at the hostel) and today (Dubin, 2002).



Figure 11. The self-consciously restored and reconstructed section of Sacramento known as "Old Sacramento."

fallen out of fashion as a residential neighborhood, and the house and lot were sold to the Van Voorhies Investment Company. The lot on which the mansion was built was quite ample, and Van Voorhies opted to move the entire house forty feet to the west of its original foundations (figure 12). Steve Haynes, current manager of the hostel, conjectures that the company moved the house in anticipation of constructing a gas station on the corner during the advent and early days of the automobile. (If this was the intent, there is no evidence that such a gas station was ever constructed, and the corner portion of the lot remained empty while the house stood in what were once the formal gardens.) Relocation of any house is no small task, and the complexity of this move was compounded by the house's unusual size. Built on a large lot, the house was on the order of twice as large as the typical Sacramento home of its era. Still, there was an unobstructed path to the new proximal site and the structure was moved without being cut into sections.³⁹

In 1907, the mansion was sold to H. Edward Yardley who added a stable to the rear. The building was used as the Clark and Booth Funeral Home until 1946 when ownership transferred to A.M. Holmes and Charles Munro. Holmes and Munro continued to operate the funeral parlor until 1956 when Holmes's son, A.M. "Mory" Holmes, Jr. joined the firm. Holmes Jr. took over operations, and renamed the business Holmes Funeral Home, which operated from 1967 until Holmes Jr.'s retirement in 1972.

From 1972-1988, the Williams mansion remained a part of Sacramento local lore. After Mory's death, the structure was leased to "The University Club", a private association of judges, attorneys and state legislators; during the day, the building offered a meeting place

³⁹ Steve Haynes, HI-Sacramento Hostel Manager, interview by the author, July 2002.

for teas and lunches. In 1978, the Club's lease ended and the Holmes family reopened the building as a restaurant and entertainment hall called "Mory's Place—The Victorian", serving lunch to downtown workers and providing banquet space for weddings, dances and parties. Today, it is common for locals to visit the mansion and show it to their friends and family, having been married there or having attended their high school prom at "Mory's."

The Williams mansion and the people associated with it comprised part of the history of California and of the city of Sacramento in particular. Williams was one of so many adventurers that came to California during the second half of the nineteenth century, seeking instant wealth through the harvesting of gold and later becoming entrepreneurs and prominent citizens in a rapidly developing network of cities and towns. Clark, Booth and Yardley originally operated their funeral parlor in the mansion; the funeral home was California's oldest and witnessed the untimely deaths of some of Sacramento's most "colorful" characters. Subsequently, the building housed functions for businessmen and legislators, exclusive engagements and public entertainment. During the 1980s, the mansion's second history began—its history as a youth hostel.

History of the Hostel

After "Mory's" closed in the late 1980s, the Williams mansion was sold to a consortium of developers who intended to construct a highrise office tower on the site. Given that the new construction would necessitate demolition of the original residence, the development group, led by Joe Benvenuti⁴⁰, agreed to donate the structure to an agency

⁴⁰ Richard Ehisen, "Hostel Territory," *Sacramento News and Review* (January 18, 2001).

willing to remove it from the site. In 1989, the local Golden Gate Council of AYH acquired the structure and made plans for its journey to a new location.

AYH came together with the developer to efficiently solve a mutual problem. Barbara Wein, Executive Director of the GGC, had been seeking a new, larger hostel location in Sacramento to replace the existing smaller one operated by Thomas J. McBride in the midtown area. Part of the impetus for a larger Sacramento hostel was the desire to accommodate large groups of California school children; the state-mandated school curriculum for the fourth grade requires students to study state government and California history in general, with many classrooms taking field trips to the state capitol, Sacramento. If the hostel were to be too small to accommodate an entire school group, that group would typically seek lodging elsewhere (a prohibitively expensive option), try to make the trip to the capitol and back in a single day, or stay home. Because of this and other potential sources of hostellers, the GGC knew that a larger hostel would be financially viable. Through the combination of intense effort and commitment by the GGC and the serendipitous need for the developers to move the Williams mansion, it was arranged that the GGC would own the house and would move it for the second time in its history.

Several obstacles would be overcome before the house was moved five years later, in 1994. Although the building had been donated, a suitable lot still needed to be found. The "F" Street property on which the former McBride hostel had stood was an option, but it proved too small for a large mansion that had been originally built on a double-lot. As well, in order to manipulate the building to move it to that site or most others, the structure would have had to have been cut into parts and reassembled, an option the GGC would not

consider. Separation of the house into segments could have been avoided were the city to have granted a permit to cut back the canopy of trees lining the streets between old and new sites, but the City of Sacramento is notorious for protecting its older trees and does not willingly allow them to be drastically trimmed. The site that would accommodate the Williams mansion was going to have to be large, close, and a straight shot from the former one.

The City of Sacramento helped in this search for a suitable new site, as it was eager to save the Williams mansion from demolition. After several options had been exhausted, the City offered a State motor-pool lot one block away at 917 “H” Street (figure 12). The City was in the planning stages of creating a tourist destination area on and around that block of “H” Street, consisting of other relocated historic Victorian-era houses moved from nearby areas, and the hostel would be able to remain on the block to anchor the project. This project would have recreated the feel of the nineteenth century “Merchants’ Row”, and in fact the motor-pool lot was the former site of another, similar historic mansion. (This project never came to fruition and the Williams mansion is currently the only one of its kind on that block.)

In January of 1994, the Sacramento City Council officially approved the site for this use and offered the Golden Gate Council of AYH at twenty-five year lease on the land. Although the concept was strongly backed by the then-mayor Joe Serna and many council members because of its positive benefits for economic development and historic preservation⁴¹, the motor-pool site posed its own set of problems. First, the empty lot was

⁴¹ AYH capital campaign materials (1994, unpublished).

immediately behind City Hall and its use for the hostel would directly conflict with early plans for a City Hall annex. Councilman Jimmie Yee openly objected to this use of the lot for this reason, but was outvoted.⁴² As well, the soil had become saturated with toxins as a result of the motor pool and the EPA required an extensive cleanup. (The cleanup would eventually use up the entire construction contingency fund for the project, an estimated 50,000 dollars of unexpected costs.)⁴³ A great amount of money would need to be raised, not only for relocation but also for an extensive remodel and restoration to return the home's interior to its former glory and to make the structure functional as a youth hostel.

Still, on October 15, 1994, the 350-ton Williams mansion was moved to the City Hall site. Housemoving has been surprisingly common throughout Sacramento's history, and dates back to the days "before the levees" when the American and Sacramento rivers would flood seasonally and sometimes terribly. The Williams mansion is rumored to be the second-largest structure in California to have been moved intact without being cut into sections.

Financing for this project came from several sources. The GGC ran a capital campaign entitled "Save the Mansion and Open its Doors to the World" and was able to raise money from individual community members and from corporations and institutions. The National Trust for Historic Preservation provided a \$150,000 low-interest loan, contingent on certain preservation criteria being met during the move and subsequent restoration. The preservation community in general supported the project, but conflicts arose with some local groups who may have felt that the building should be preserved as a

⁴² Deb Kollars, "Mansion's second move..." *The Sacramento Bee* (Jan 1, 2002).

⁴³ Steve Hayne's casual estimate.

house museum would have been, rather than as a living adaptive use complete with the compromises inherent therein.⁴⁴

The GGC hired local architect Bob McCabe to design the remodel and restoration of the house, and the John F. Otto, Inc. Construction company to perform refurbishments, construct the new basement, and do all sitework and landscaping for the new site. Throughout the process, AYH was “extremely committed” not only to the new hostel but to the idea of doing an admirable job preserving the structure, finishes and overall appearance while conforming with modern building code. In April of 1995, after \$1.2 million in city redevelopment money and the \$1 million raised by the GGC were spent, the Sacramento International Hostel opened its doors to visitors.

At the time, it was thought that this would be the end of the story. However, in an unusual twist, the Williams mansion would be moved for the third time a mere seven years later to the spot on which it was originally constructed (figure 12). Apparently, Councilman Yee had been astute in his farsighted opposition to the City Hall sight in 1991 because in 2001 the City Council approved a design for the City Hall annex that required use of the hostel’s lot. As the City entered into negotiations with AYH to break the lease, both parties were upset by the prospect of moving the house again; AYH would ordinarily have been in the power position with 18 years left in a legal ground lease, but the City had powers of eminent domain to use should negotiations have failed. A plan to build around the hostel in a creative way was scrapped early on. Finally, the City made a financial commitment to ease the difficulties of the move and purchased the house’s original lot on 10th and H Streets

⁴⁴ Steve Haynes made this statement but did not refer to a specific group.



Figure 12. This map of Sacramento shows “Old Sacramento” and the Sacramento River at the left. The hostel’s four locations (first and fourth being the same) at the upper right: 1) 1885-1906, 2) 1907-1994, 3) 1995-2002, and 4) current.

for over \$2 million from developer Joe Benvenuti—the lot was still empty and available, as the speculative highrise office tower project had fizzled in the 90s. The City paid for the move, for loss of revenue, for ramp-up time after reopening, and also for an office and to keep staff on during the seven-month period between October 31st of 2001 and May 10th of 2002. The total bill for the 2001 move was approximately \$4.5 million, almost all of which was paid by tax dollars. “There are ironies to this,” said Councilman Yee, “but overall I’m just very pleased with how things are turning out.”⁴⁵ The Sacramento International Hostel reopened on May 10th, 2002.

Building Description

The Sacramento International Hostel now provides 80 beds for students and other travelers in approximately 13,000 square feet of space (figures 13-16). The 1994 move was an opportunity not only to save the mansion from demolition but to raise extra money for a restoration and remodeling project. According to the current staff, the structure “was not in good shape” before the 1994 restoration. As mentioned in the previous section, local preservation architect Bob McCabe was the architect of record for the eight-month remodel.

At the ground floor, no major structural or programmatic changes were desired, so McCabe concentrated on restoring woodwork and details like original fireplace tiles and textured wallpaper in the foyer (figure 18). The kitchen was brought to code and fitted with needed cabinet space for group use.

⁴⁵ Kollars.

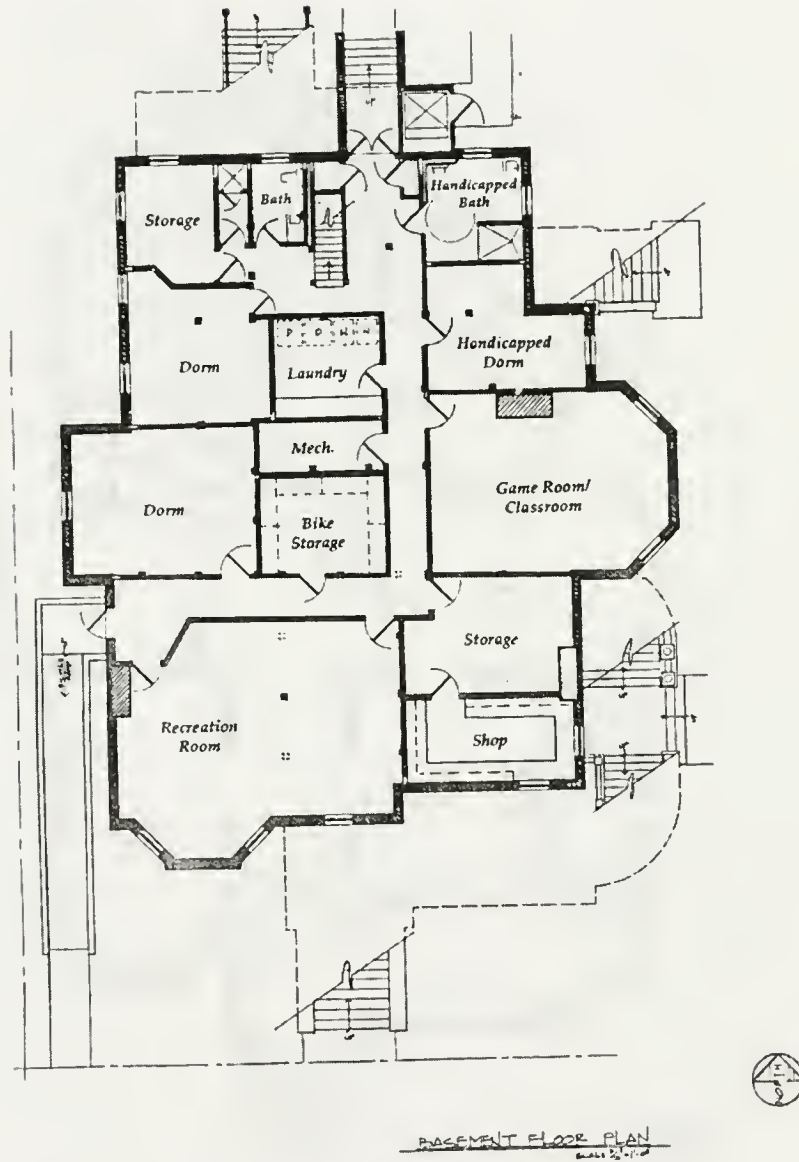


Figure 13. Ground Floor, Sacramento International Hostel (plans taken from the capital campaign's promotional material).

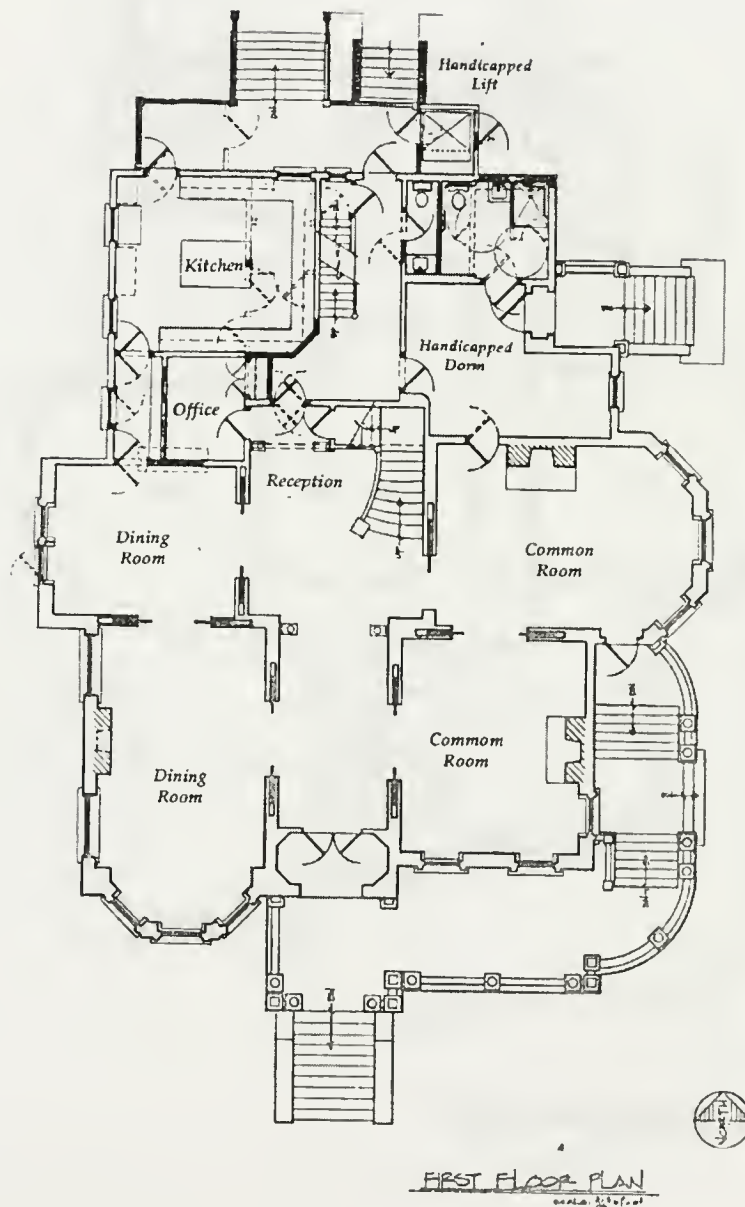


Figure 14. First Floor Plan.

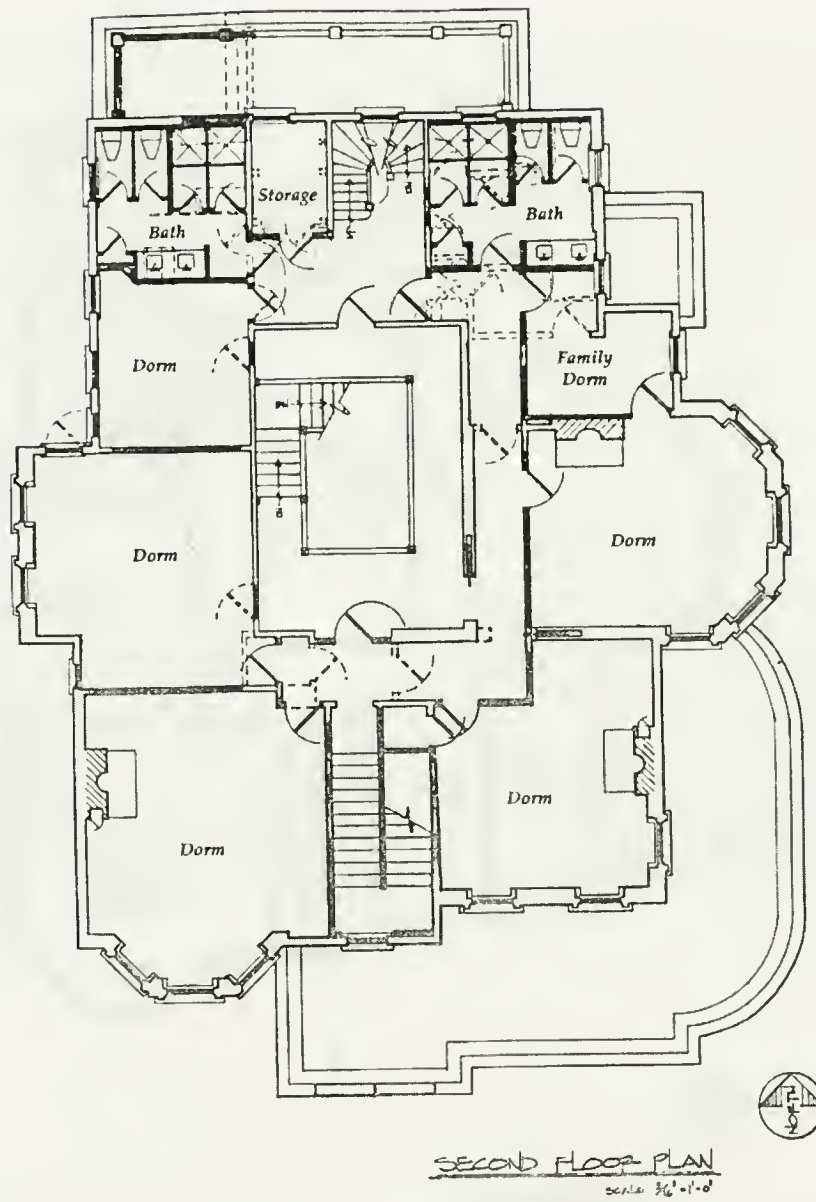


Figure 15. Second Floor Plan.

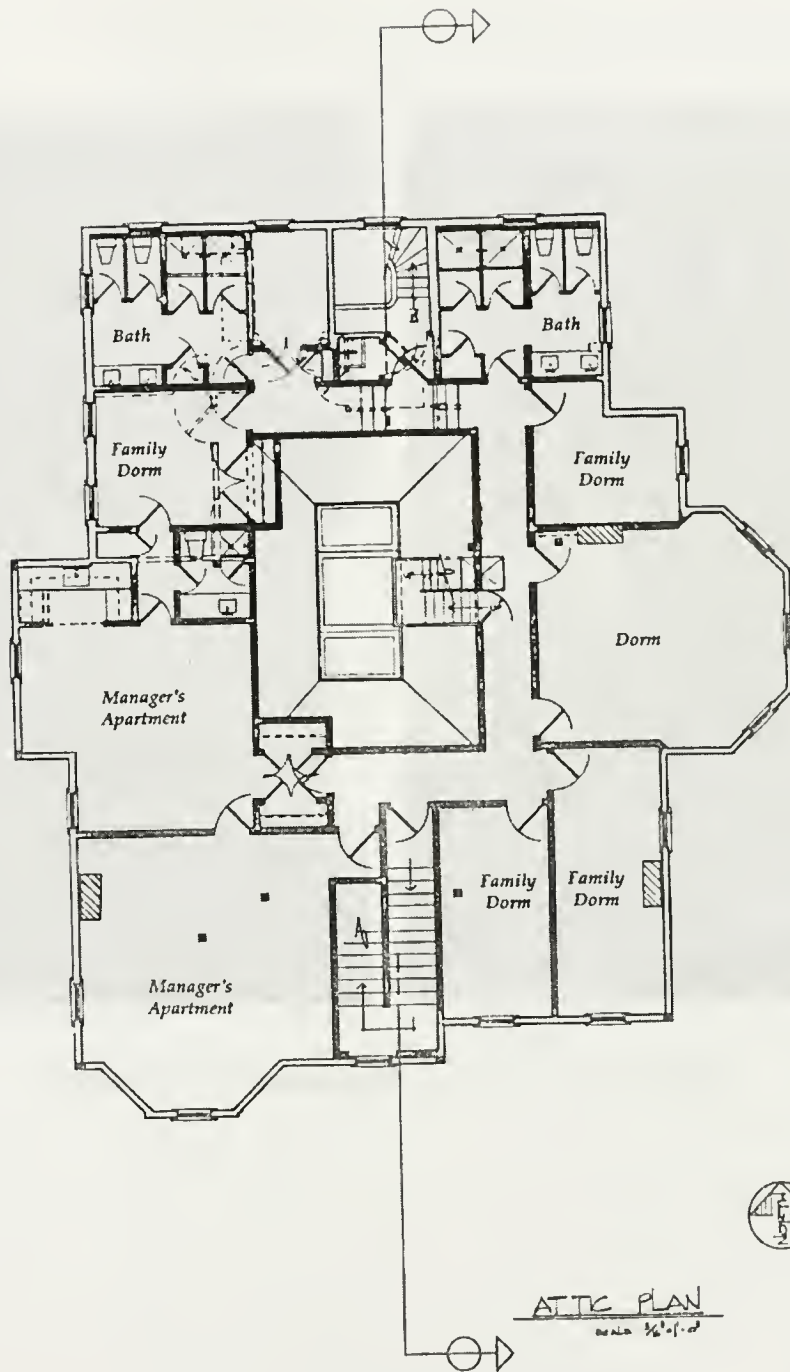


Figure 16. Attic Plan.



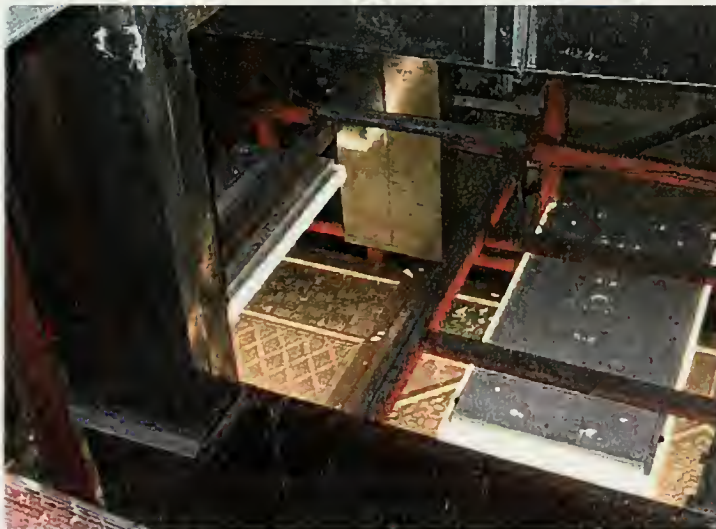
Figures 17, 18. Fireplaces with restored tiles (Dubin, 2002).

At the second story, the original wall partitions had already been removed during the building's tenure as a restaurant. The grand central stair was surrounded at the second floor by a railing. An open stair like this is no longer permitted by fire code, so the architect designed an enclosure complete with original wood doors to separate the double-height stair from the second-floor bedrooms (figure 19).

The high attic originally allowed for a large skylight to rise above the main double-height central stair; the remodel kept and restored the interior skylight using recreations of the original painted-glass panes. Electric lighting above the interior glass structure eliminated the need for an exterior skylight at the roof level, and allowed for a lower-maintenance, cheaper, water-tight re-roofing. This also opened up space between the artificial lighting and roof for modern HVAC and mechanical systems not seen from below (figure 20).

McCabe was also charged with finishing remainder of the large, timbered attic space to accommodate additional dormitories. McCabe adapted the attic by carving out the perimeter into some interesting, high-ceilinged bedrooms with sheetrocked walls and exposed wooden structural members. To the average observer the attic rooms are significantly different in style and level of finish, and perhaps this makes it obvious that this portion of the hostel is not as the building was originally designed (figure 21).

During the third move (figures 22-27), the Williams mansion was placed on a newly designed and excavated basement that included several large dormitory rooms and a social room/classroom. The basement offers much-needed extra space; however, its excavation destroyed the original foundations of the house that dated from its construction in 1885.



Figures 19, 20. Above, new enclosure for formerly open stair. Below, artificial lighting above reconstructed skylight, with ductwork adjacent. (Dubin, 2002).



Figure 21. Renovation of the attic to accommodate dorm space (Dubin, 2002).



Figures 22, 23. The Llewellyn Williams Mansion on the move to its third and current location. (Photos of the house-moving by Bill Taylor and Yadi Kavakebi).



Figures 24, 25. The mansion being placed on its new foundation.



Figures 26, 27. Close-up of Montgomery's house-moving apparatus; the final positioning of the house at its new location.

No significant damage was reported to have occurred during any of the building's three moves. Steve Haynes reports: "It's an old house, so there are always maintenance issues and everyday problems," but the house is in good order. The city paid for an upgrade from a wooden fence to an iron gate outside, and ample parking spaces now occupy the site of the former gardens.

Finally, the hostel proudly displays commendations by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and other preservation organizations on its foyer walls, as well as historic photographs and a case containing original artifacts from the house. Furniture downstairs is a combination of original and recreated in the main sitting rooms and entry. Dormitory beds upstairs are standard-issue bunks that one would find in any AYH hostel, a concept that appeals to those who believe that non-original furniture, details, or additions should not try to blend in with original fabric in order that a building be properly "read."

Conclusions

The goal of this thesis, as stated in its introduction, is to assess AYH hostels in terms of five chosen benchmarks: *Site Appropriateness*, *Cultural and Educational Value*, *Acquisition and Funding*, *Preservation Goals*, and *Continuing Viability*.

Site Appropriateness. When the questions for this thesis were conceived, the term "site appropriateness" was to involve answers to several questions that dealt with usefulness of a hostel in a particular location as well as with ease of adaptability of given structure. The questions, "Is the hostel well used?" and "Does this location fill a need by providing access

to a place that travelers want to go?” have become harder to answer during the past year due to the overall downturn of the tourist industry after September 11, 2001. The statistics for number of overnights have shown drops consistently throughout all hostels and hotels in the nation, with an especially notable drop in foreign tourism.

Still, conclusions can be drawn from general facts despite the inauspicious attendance since the hostel reopened in May of 2002. The Sacramento hostel provides access to the state capitol in California, and therefore fills a need for both grade-schoolers and general tourism. The hostel is located in the downtown area, and is walking distance from the Amtrak station, the Greyhound bus station, and local light rail and buses. Hostellers may visit the Capitol building, the various museums downtown, the renowned California State Railroad Museum, and “Old Sacramento”, a 28-acre State Historic Park and National Landmark. In addition, Sacramento is a starting point for those wishing to swim or raft in the American River or the Sacramento River, or for hiking and biking along the American River Parkway.

The adaptability of the Williams mansion for use as a hostel is evident. With a modern basement and remodeled attic, the commodious hostel is large enough to accommodate traveling school groups, small groups and individual tourists. The large footprint of the original house has made this use possible, and visitors find the adaptation comfortable and the high level of restoration and original finish make HI-Sacramento unique and relatively luxurious.

Cultural and Education Value. This heading prompts the question, “Does the use of this historic American building provide a unique window into American History for both foreign and domestic travelers?”

The Llewellyn Williams mansion is one of five Italianate mansions of comparable size and historic significance in Sacramento. It and the other four, the California Governor’s Mansion (Nathaniel Goodell, 1877), the Leland Stanford Mansion (Seth Babson, 1857), the Heilbron House (Goodell, 1875), and the J. Neely Johnson House (architect unknown, 1853) are collectively known as the “Big Five.” Of these five, all but the Williams mansion are listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the Governor’s and Stanford Mansions are California State Historic Landmarks as well.

Built by hardware merchant Albert Gallatin, the Governor’s Mansion (figure 28) served as the California governor’s home until the 1960s and was home to thirteen California governors in total. Today, much of the original furniture, drapes and rugs of early residents are still in the house, and guided tours are available daily, on the hour, to the public. Tour guides offer descriptions of individual rooms and stories about the California governors for the admission price of one dollar.

The Leland Stanford Mansion (figure 29), now known as the Stanford-Lathrop House, was once home to Leland Stanford, one of the founders of the Union Pacific Railroad and the eighth governor of California. It is currently closed to the public for an extensive renovation, after which it will serve as reception space for the current governor and other legislators. The house will not be open to the public “for at least a couple of years” according to a recorded phone message.



Figure 28. The California Governor's Mansion (David Joslyn Collection, Sacramento Archives and Museum Collection Center).



Figure 29. The Stanford-Lathrop Mansion (photograph available at www.arch-light.com).

The other two structures, the Neely house and the Heilbron mansion, are not presented as house museums and do not offer tours. The Neely, on 10th and “F” Streets, is listed as owned by the local government and “vacant/not in use” on the National Register of Historic Places. The Heilbron, at 7th and “O” Streets, is now home to La Galleria Posada, which operates a bookstore, gift shop, fine-art gallery, and community meeting space.

In summary, of the “big five” mansions, only the Heilbron, the Governor’s, and the Williams mansions are currently open to the public in some form. Although the Governor’s Mansion tours provide a historically accurate view of early twentieth century interiors, the visitor is only allowed a scripted, forty-minute experience. In contrast, the Williams mansion does not prioritize historical interpretation of all of the home’s interiors. Still, only in the Williams house can a visitor linger over the restored interiors of the first floor parlor and living room, or sit on the wide porch and drink iced tea on a hot summer day. The Williams mansion offers historic photographs and artifacts from the house’s past on display without the rigid structure of a guided-tour in a house museum. Although the hostel is for use by paying hostellers or by community groups who have made arrangements to use the facilities, and thus not technically open to the general public, anyone wishing to tour the facility during business hours would likely be welcomed by the staff. The author would argue that this comprises “a unique experience of American History”, especially for foreign tourists.

Acquisition and Finance. This project investigates the realities of creating youth hostels from historic structures. Since its hypothesis includes the proposition that hostel adaptations can solve “problem use” dilemmas in vacant or decaying historic building, and that structures may be saved from demolition for just such a use where other uses would

prove unfeasible, the author has sought to determine the validity of the romantic notion that AYH rescues historic buildings. In each case study, how has AYH acquired the property? Has the structure been saved from destruction? Where did the money come from to adapt the structure, and what role to partnering private and/or governmental agencies play?

In the case of the Llewellyn Williams mansion, it is valid to suggest that the house was “saved” by the Golden Gate Council of AYH. In the 1980s, the mansion was sold to a group of developers who intended to raze it unless someone wanted to remove it from the site. The serendipitous aspect of the hostel adaptation was twofold. First, AYH was able to acquire, move and adapt the building because of fundraising done within the hostelling and preservation communities. Second, since the City of Sacramento was actively interested in saving the house, the city council was seeking a legitimate public-interest reason to throw money at the project and a youth hostel fit the bill. An international hostel in the Williams mansion was the happy intersection of these interests.

It should also be recognized that although the Sacramento city council was able to twice offer financial and planning assistance to the hostel during the last two of the house’s three moves, in both cases the expenditure has been controversial. Many city residents complained that taxpayers spent a grand total of \$5.7 million on the projects two phases, and are irritated by the apparent poor planning that resulted in the two moves.⁴⁶ However, most consider the hostel an asset to the community, and eventually the memory of the costs will be forgotten.

⁴⁶ Kollars.

Preservation Goals. The Williams Mansion conversion to use as a youth hostel may not adhere strictly to the most rigorous historic preservation standards, yet it makes a remarkably noble effort given that historic preservation per se is not listed in the AYH mission statement. The hostel adaptation and restoration in the mid 1990s actually brought the structure closer to its original layout on the second floor than it had become as “Mory’s.” And, though the attic remodel is not historic, the ground floor and parts of the second floor are quite carefully preserved and restored. The hostel displays a level of historic interior detail in the main spaces of the first floor that is arguably one of the finest in the AYH system.

Continuing Viability. It is useful to assess the each historic hostel’s sustainability. Are there provisions for repair and preventative maintenance? Does the use as a hostel negatively or positively affect the physical structure?

Roger Lathe, Preservation Chair of Sacramento Old City Association, said this in reference to the hostel: “American Youth Hostels has demonstrated their ability to preserve and maintain historic, important buildings throughout the nation. We are confident that ‘Mory’s’ will continue to be an outstanding architectural asset to our city while being used as a hostel.”⁴⁷ AYH, and particular the Golden Gate Council, has demonstrated an understanding of the importance of building maintenance. Steve Haynes, the current hostel manager, says that the building requires constant attention in the form of minor repairs. From a visitor’s perspective, the hostel appears well maintained and freshly painted.

⁴⁷ AYH capital campaign promotional material.

In terms of abuse, Haynes said that hostellers are fairly respectful of the physical facilities. There was no evidence of vandalism or damage to either the interior or exterior. School children who use the hostel are typically chaperoned by an adult, so the potential for vandalism and disrespect to historic fabric is somewhat limited.

Finally, although it is difficult to assess economic sustainability in the wake of a tourism downturn after the terrorist attacks of 2001, the hostel had been financially self-supporting before this year.



Figure 30. Plaque at the Sacramento International Hostel (Dubin, 2002).

Chapter Three

CASE STUDY: THE ASSOCIATION RESIDENCE FOR RESPECTABLE AGED INDIGENT FEMALES

Today, AYH hostels exist in many of the nation's major cities as the result of a 1980s comprehensive plan to produce "gateway" hostels in these areas. Although the original hostelling mission entailed bringing young people away from the crowded, industrial cities, this new push for gateway hostels in the inner cities responded to a perceived demand among modern hostellers, especially international travelers. A new part of the AYH mission was emerging—to provide low-cost accommodations within big cities, where travelers want to go, so that those who could otherwise not afford to stay in these high-rent areas might do so. And, although these hostels were intended to accommodate travelers in the urban hubs, they were also thought to be an ideal way to provide information about other, smaller hostels outside the cities that visitors might not otherwise know about. The term "gateway" reflects that process of funneling hostellers towards less trafficked destinations.

AYH began with the development of its first hostel over 100 beds, located at Fort Mason in San Francisco, which opened in April of 1980 in the remodeled officers' quarters of a former army base adjacent to Fisherman's Wharf. Subsequently, the Boston hostel was created using the San Francisco project as a development model, and opened in a downtown historic structure in 1983. Following these two successes, a plan was launched that called for four more major hostels in Santa Monica, Orlando (later changed to Seattle), Washington,

D.C., and New York City. All four developments began during the mid 1980s, with the D.C. and Seattle hostels, the least complicated of the four, opening first in 1987. The Santa Monica hostel and the New York hostel both represented a greater development challenge; each required a multi-faceted financial packaging, city and state assistance, and coordination with the local Landmarks Commission. Both opened in 1990.

New York City was a particular development priority during this period of growth. Many major cities already had at least one AYH facility by that time, while New York City, the most visited city in the country, had yet to open even one. AYH wanted the New York project to become their “flagship hostel and gateway to North America,”⁴⁸ and needed a correspondingly magnanimous structure to house it. The building that would come to house this flagship would be the former Association Residence for Respectable Aged Indigent Females, a building designed by one of the country’s most prominent architects of the nineteenth century, Richard Morris Hunt. The adaptation of the former Association Residence for use as a hostel would prove to solve several dilemmas—AYH would be able to open a spacious hostel for New York City, the city would reclaim an abandoned and deteriorating piece of architectural history, and the neighborhood called “Manhattan Valley” would remove an eyesore and replace it with an economic catalyst. This case study illuminates a challenging development process involving a large number of community groups, government agencies, private corporations, and individuals.

⁴⁸ “An International Youth Hostel for New York City: The Campaign for the New York International Hostel,” Capital Campaign brochure, undated.

Background

Richard Morris Hunt, once called the “dean of American architects” by his peers at the close of the nineteenth century, was the designer of many residential and civic structures, primarily in New England and the Mid-Atlantic. The first American to attend the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, Hunt returned to the United States to open a studio that would train Henry van Brunt, Charles Gambrill, George Post, William Ware and Frank Furness.⁴⁹ Known as “the Vanderbilt architect” because of the opulent homes he built for the sons of William Henry Vanderbilt, Hunt established a reputation for catering to the architectural needs of the Gilded Age “nouveau riche.”⁵⁰ During the twentieth century, a new modernist school of thought instigated a backlash against Hunt and his brand of Beaux-Arts historicism. Although several of his grand homes remain in Newport, Rhode Island, once the most fashionable of seaside summer colonies, all of the chateaux he built in New York have been demolished and it seems that Hunt has been forgotten by the Manhattan public at large. Of his many works in New York City, very few structures remain. Interestingly, they are not private homes, but rather some of his more democratic works including the central section of the main façade of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the pedestal base of the Statue of Liberty, and the subject of this case study—the former Association Residence for Respected Aged Indigent Females (figure 31).

The Association Residence building was a significant foray into housing for the poor and stood in contrast with Hunt’s town house commissions for the rich. Founded in 1814

⁴⁹ Jay Shockley, Landmarks Preservation Commission Designation List 164: Association Residence for Respectable Aged Indigent Females (New York: The Commission, 1983), 2.

⁵⁰ Paul R. Baker, *Richard Morris Hunt* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1980), xii.



Figure 31. The Former Association Residence, as it appears today (Dubin, 2002).

to provide assistance to widows and orphans of soldiers who perished in the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, the Association first commissioned an earlier residence (paid for by John Jacob Astor on land donated by Peter Stuyvesant) on East 20th Street in 1838 as “an alternative to the Almshouse, filled as it is with the dregs of society.”⁵¹ After this facility was outgrown, the socially prominent women who formed the Association’s Board hired Hunt to design the new Residence, which would be open to any “respectable non-Catholic gentlewoman over sixty years of age, on payment of \$150 and the surrender of any property she possessed.”⁵² Twenty lots of land were purchased in 1881 on Amsterdam Avenue between 104th and 105th Streets for a new building to “relieve and comfort those aged females, who once enjoyed a good degree of affluence, but are now reduced to poverty by the vicissitudes of Providence.”⁵³ The women who comprised the board felt that Hunt’s name in itself was a guarantee of quality design and good taste.

As Hunt designed it, the Residence was a four-story, brick faced structure clad in rusticated stone at the basement level and topped by a slate mansard roof with a series of projecting gables. As in some of the opulent homes he built for the New York elite, this building drew compositional ideas from the English Victorian Gothic and detailing motifs from the French Chateaux.

The home officially opened its doors in December, 1883, as an 85-room C-shaped structure. In 1907, philanthropist Mrs. Russell Sage donated money to add thirty rooms and a chapel, extending the structure to West 103rd Street. Architect Charles A. Rich designed

⁵¹ Shockley, 4.

⁵² Shockley, 5.

⁵³ Ibid.

the addition to harmonize with the original building and essentially repeat the patterns of the original facades.⁵⁴

By 1965, the Association Residence upgraded the establishment in response to tighter standards for nursing home sanitary conditions, and renamed it the Association Residence for Women. Still, the structure was considered obsolete as a nursing home and its remaining patients were relocated to another facility in the 1970s. The owner planned to demolish the Residence, which was condemned as a fire hazard and stood empty from 1974, home only to occasional drug dealing and homeless. By the mid 70s, however, a preservation effort was underway to “save” the derelict structure. In 1974, Robert A. M. Stern, on behalf of the Architectural League of New York, urged the New York Landmarks Commission to reconsider a decision it had made not to hold a public hearing towards designation of the Association Home as a New York Landmark. Stern declared in a letter to the editor of the New York Times that the Association Residence was, “...not one of Hunt’s more lavish designs; rather, ...an outstanding example of institutional and functional architecture in the United States...[and] a superb model of what one of America’s finest architects did when faced with a problem of sociological urgency.”⁵⁵

The effort to publicize the Residence’s plight continued, and by 1975 the building was nominated (by students in the Historic Preservation program at nearby Columbia University) and accepted to the National Register of Historic Places.⁵⁶ However, the entire roof structure and the flooring systems at the upper two levels were destroyed during a local

⁵⁴ Shockley, 5.

⁵⁵ Letter to the Editor written by Robert A. M. Stern, “Designating Landmarks,” *New York Times* (Dec. 25, 1974), 26.

⁵⁶ Rachel, Cox, “Windows on the World: New York City’s Hunt Building joins a network of historic youth hostels worldwide,” *Historic Preservation: The Magazine of the National Trust for Historic Preservation* (1998), 68.

blackout in 1977, causing the Association to declare its intent to demolish the home (figure 32). Before this could happen, the City of New York assumed ownership of the property through tax foreclosure in 1978.⁵⁷ When Paul Baker's definitive book *Richard Morris Hunt* was published by the MIT Press in 1980, its author stated, "the fate of the Association Residence is still uncertain."⁵⁸

During this period, while the Architectural League and other concerned architects were mobilizing to promote the Hunt building, neighbors in Manhattan Valley wondered about its fate as well. A non-profit local development group called Valley Restoration Local Development Corporation (VRLDC), along with other community residents and activists, was determined to see the site become something attractive and beneficial to the neighborhood and the city as a whole. The idea of a youth hostel was proposed in 1980 and received round endorsement from neighbors. The benefits of a youth hostel for Manhattan Valley seemed numerous and compelling: an abandoned building would be restored, local residents would find employment in the new business, local merchants would find customers in the young travelers, New York City would finally have an accommodation for travelers of lesser means, and Manhattan Valley would benefit from a cultural exchange that would likely take place with visitors from all over the world. With this in mind, VRLDC, along with a working group of architects, planners, attorneys, developers, and public agencies negotiated

⁵⁷ Maria Stueglitz, "Westside Glory: New York Landmark to become city's first youth hostel," *Preservation News* (July 1987), 1,12.

⁵⁸ Baker, 515.



Figure 32. The Association Residence for the Relief of Respectable Aged Indigent Females, as it appeared in 1983, before renovation. (Jim Garrison, 1978.)

with the City of New York to acquire and develop the Residence as an International Hostel for New York.⁵⁹

History of the Hostel

For AYH, the New York hostel project was unprecedented in scale and would prove to be a model for future projects, by both positive and negative example, regarding public/private partnerships and other development issues. (In particular, AYH learned from New York and applied the lessons to a similar, large-scale hostel in Chicago, which opened in 2000.) The New York hostel would take community interests to heart quite literally; the success of the venture would depend on support not only from City and State representatives and the U.S. Congress, but also from the city's Department of Finance, New York State's Urban Development Corporation, the City Landmarks Conservancy, the Energy Conservation Foundation, the local Community Board #7, local churches, and smaller interest groups like the merchants of the area and the Tenants Association of the adjoining housing project. Finally, the hostel's neighbors and supporters would remember the days of the burnt-out and derelict structure and profess that the restoration of the building for this use brought real change to the neighborhood, giving it, "dignity and a sense of purpose."⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Much of the information presented in this chapter was compiled by the Executive Director of the VRLDC, Lillian Rydell, for submission to the Rudy Bruner Award for Excellence in the Urban Environment in 1993. In this application, many people involved with the project included statements that described elements of the project and the role they played in the process. The author has found no evidence that HI-NYC won the award.

⁶⁰ Bruner Application, statement by Pam Tice.

In negotiating with the City for the right to own and develop the Hunt building, the first advantage that the AYH/VRLDC team brought to the table was the nobility of its purpose. At a time of rising real estate values, the idea of “gentrification” concerned the city, local groups, and neighbors. Several developers of luxury residences had already attempted to purchase the building in order to convert it to a high-end cooperative apartment house.⁶¹ Community Planning Board #7 and local elected officials realized the importance of creating an anchor for the existing community rather than an opening for a replacement community, and the City of New York was amenable to this concept. It worked with the local groups to make the hostel happen instead of allowing the property to be sold to the highest bidder on an open market.

VRLDC worked to locate the funds to both purchase the property and to complete its restoration and renovation. The AYH/VRLDC team was not anti-developer and in fact understood the importance of gaining a developer’s financial perspective. The Sybedon Corporation was brought on early (in fact, Sybedon helped negotiate the purchase of the property from the city for \$716,000⁶²) to provide development expertise because the company had a record of working with the then-current tax laws involving historic tax credits. The developer sought to “package” the project—to attract private equity and financing for a public/private/non-profit partnership.

Sybedon’s roles were numerous. It pulled permits and gained approvals from the relevant agencies regarding zoning, building codes, and other regulations, and it hired the

⁶¹ Bruner Application, statement by Senator David A. Paterson.

⁶² Melanie Eversley, “Manhattan Valley to host Youth Hostel,” *New York Newsday* (July 18, 1988), 1. Another article quoted a lower figure of \$600,000 (Sheryl McCarthy, “In an often Hostile City, Hostel is a Sign of Hope,” *New York Newsday* [April 30, 1990], 29.

architects, engineers and all outside consultants on the project. Sybedon worked with AYH/VRLDC to program the space, market the facility, and to define the appropriate relationships between the entities. The corporation organized the project's financing. It obtained bank loans, prepared a public offering of \$5 million in limited partnership equity units, and it provided seed capital for acquisition and other pre-construction costs. The \$7.7 million debt portion of the financing that was provided by triple tax-exempt⁶³ New York City Industrial Revenue Bonds was only marketable at low cost after Sybedon secured an irrevocable letter of credit from a bank. Finally, Sybedon negotiated government assistance from city, state and federal sources: from the city, it obtained a 22-year real estate tax abatement and some purchase money mortgage financing; from the state, a \$400,000 low interest loan from the Urban Development Corporation; and from the federal government, an \$860,000 low interest "UDAG" loan (Urban Development Action Grant) from the Department of Housing and Urban Development.⁶⁴

The process of gathering the anticipated \$15 million⁶⁵ necessary to adapt the Association Residence to a youth hostel began complicated and became progressively more so. During the period when the developer (Sybedon) and the NYC Public Development Corporation (PDC, the city's project manager) were developing the financing scheme, the federal tax law was changing. Since federal historic tax credits were crucial to the project, changing tax laws throughout the 1980s had a critical impact on each development scenario.

⁶³ Municipalities can offer bonds to their own citizens that are tax-exempt at the federal, state and local levels (the "triple" in triple tax-exempt).

⁶⁴ Bruner Application, statement by Bertram Lewis, chairman of Sybedon.

⁶⁵ \$15 million was anticipated, over \$17 million was ultimately required.

In particular, the Tax Act of 1986 changed the rules mid-game, causing great restructuring to the package and thus adding to project costs.⁶⁶ Before 1986, relatively sophisticated investors would typically buy units of \$100,000 or more in a tax-credit project. The new tax act effectively allowed the credits for this project to be utilized only by small investors in a public offering. Bertram Lewis, chairman of Sybedon, wrote, “to our knowledge, this was one of the first public offerings of its type where we had to educate a totally new and relatively unsophisticated market to a complex investment product, at a time of great economic uncertainty.”⁶⁷ Some tax benefits originally planned, like the 25% investment tax credit and accelerated depreciation, were also substantially modified by the 1986 Act, but were “grandfathered” into the act in a transition clause. (Although financing

⁶⁶ *Tax Reform Act of 1986*, Public Law 99-514, 100 Stat. 2085 (October 22, 1986)—Reagan’s tax reform changes effective January 1, 1987, reduced the tax base from personal income and corporate sources to two tax brackets (15% and 28%) for personal income and a maximum 35% tax for corporate income. At the same time, the changes broadened the tax base in general by eliminating many deductions and tax credits from the previous tax code. The following is a summary of an update issued by the Preservation Assistance Division of the U.S. Department of the Interior (October 22, 1986).

- A. Investment Tax Credits (ITC): The former 25% ITC for certified rehabilitations was reduced to 20% with a full adjustment to basis, and the 15% and 20% ITCs for rehabilitation of older commercial buildings were both lowered to 10% for building constructed before 1936.
- B. ITCs for Low Income Housing: All previous incentives for low-income housing were replaced by a new 9% ITC per unit per year (for 10 years) for units developed without other federal subsidies and a 4% ITC for those developed with other federal subsidies. (The LIHTC is not applicable to hostel development since it does not qualify as “housing”.)
- C. Depreciation: All property placed in service after January 1, 1987, was depreciated using a straight-line depreciation of 27.5 years for residential and 31.5 years for commercial real estate (eliminating accelerated depreciation for historic rehabilitations).
- D. Passive Losses and Credits: Income and losses were categorized as “active”, “portfolio”, or “passive”. Generally, taxpayers were barred from using losses and credits from passive sources to reduce taxes on active or portfolio income. Since “passive” income includes that earned by limited partners, this tax change altered the structure of subsequent syndications and had a great impact on the New York International Hostel packaging.
- E. Capital Gains: The exclusion of 60% of a long-term capital gain was repealed and capital gains were treated as ordinary income taxable at a maximum of 28%.
- F. Tax-Exempt Bonds: States and local jurisdictions were limited in the total value of bonds issued for quasi-government purposes (like industrial development bonds).

⁶⁷ Bruner Application, statement by Bertram Lewis.

for the New York hostel eventually came together acceptably, tax laws today are sufficiently different from those used for the project that the model for this development cannot be imitated in the current structure.)

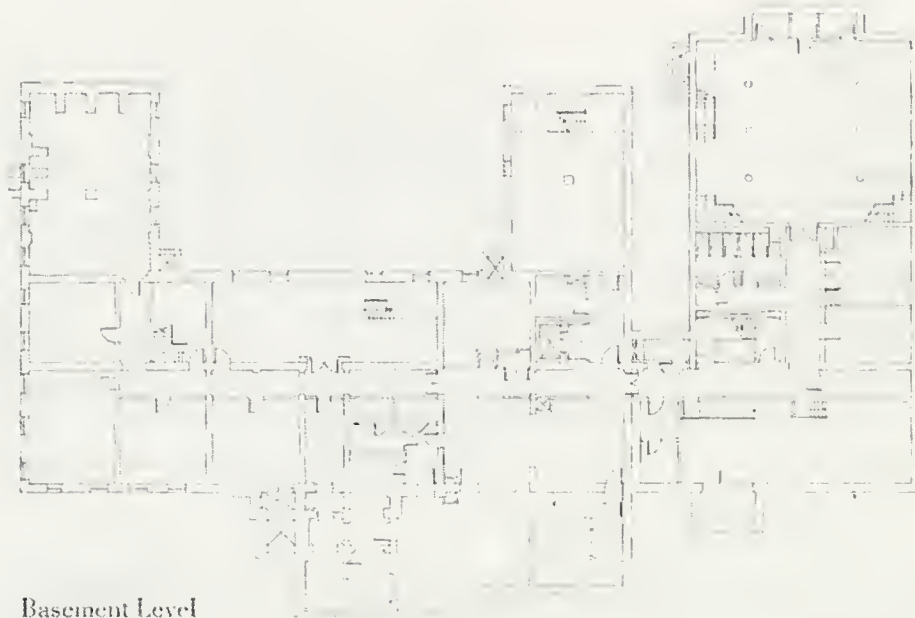
In 1987, the stock market crashed, making marketing of the financial package almost impossible for some time. Ultimately, financing was at a higher interest rate than originally planned, and investors would demand greater benefits than planned, but the project was not destined to fail. Financing would eventually prove sufficient to provide for design and construction of the New York International Hostel.

Building Description

Aware of the potential difficulties in restoring the abandoned space, VRLDC retained Larsen Associates to perform a feasibility study for the Residence in 1983.⁶⁸ Following this study, Larsen prepared a set of drawings for the city to re-roof and seal the building prior to and separate from the later development scheme. Since the 1977 blackout and fire had left the roof and mostly destroyed, it was necessary to arrest decay mechanisms by preventing further moisture from entering the building's interior until a renovation could begin. Funds from the city office of Community Development paid for a new roof in 1981.

Larsen Associates were then also hired to design the adaptation of the Residence for use as a hostel (figures 33-37). The structure had already been modified in the early part of the twentieth century, and the total structure now covered a full block frontage and surrounded a spacious garden in the rear (supposedly the largest private garden in

⁶⁸ Through their association with this project, Larsen secured the contract to design the Washington, D.C. hostel in 1986.



Basement Level



Street Level

Figures 33, 34. Basement level and street level plans. Amsterdam Avenue is to the west (bottom) and 103rd Street is to the south (right). (AYH Capital Campaign brochure, undated.)



Figures 35-37. Rear Elevation, Front Elevation and Section showing schematic planning for hostel space programming. (AYH Capital Campaign brochure, undated.)

Manhattan).⁶⁹ All in all, there were over 90,000 square feet of interior space to design, as well as a landscaping plan for the garden.

Construction on the renovation began in 1988. Because the Residence had been a nursing home, the spatial requirements for its original occupants and the new hostellers were similar—namely, a need for sleeping rooms with common bathrooms, a kitchen and dining room, and other public spaces. Existing bearing walls were kept as a foundation of the new plan. Much of the interior in the main building was gutted, new floors and code-updated stairs were built, and dorm rooms were sheathed in sheetrock. Among the elements “saved” were some striking floor mosaics and plasterwork at the interior, and gargoyles and finials at the exterior. Although the 1908 chapel was restored for use as a common room, the Tiffany stained glass windows could not be reinstalled; the Florida museum they had been displayed in for several years declined to donate the windows back to the Residence for the restoration.⁷⁰ All exterior facades were cleaned and repaired.⁷¹

Although Larsen Associates were pleased with the outcome of the renovation, Robert Larsen, AIA (principal) commented on the difficulties the firm encountered along the way.⁷² One set of struggles involved the inherent conflict between design-driven restoration decisions and budget-driven necessities. Larsen admitted,

“...so many budget decisions were made to the detriment of the finished project. The exterior of the building, the brickwork and the stonework, was not able to be completed as originally conceived (i.e. tuck pointing) and I believe this will eventually have to be done.”⁷³

⁶⁹ Eversley. Comment about garden attributed to Russell Ticcione, Director of Development for the Manhattan office of American Youth Hostels, manager of the hostel.

⁷⁰ Nina Janopaul, former AYH Director of Hostel Development, interview by the author, March 2003.

⁷¹ Cox, 68.

⁷² Bruner Application, statement by Robert Larsen.

⁷³ Ibid.

A second set of conflicts arose with regard to the New York Landmarks Commission. Although the Commission had balked during the 70s, when citizens mobilized and succeeded in getting the home on the National Register of Historic Places, it had finally recognized it as a New York Landmark in 1984. Therefore, not only was the building eligible for additional funding and tax benefits, but the details of the renovation were also subject to intense scrutiny by the Landmarks Commission. For example, the Commission required that all windows be replaced with solid wood sashes instead of vinyl or aluminum sashes. The Commission's intent was noble, as wood sashes are historically appropriate and a higher quality product than the alternatives; still, the tremendous cost of decisions like these necessitated other budget-reducing decisions by the developer.

In addition, there were points of conflict when the Commission's edicts ran counter to the demands of the Americans with Disabilities Act.⁷⁴ While Landmarks mandated that the main entrance to the hostel be located at the original main entrance of the Residence, ADA required that entrance to be "accessible" as defined by the law. To make the entrance accessible, a permanent modification in the form of a wheelchair ramp or installation of an electric lift would have been required. However, Landmarks rejected that option as inappropriate for the building's historic appearance. The clash between these two agencies resulted in a compromise that renders the hostel entrance unintuitive and ahistoric—visitors enter through an areaway into a below-grade space modified to serve as a lobby (figures 38, 39).

⁷⁴ *Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990*, Public Law 101-336, 104 Stat. 327, 101st cong., 2nd sess. (July 26, 1990).



Figures 38, 39. The original entrance (above), which bears the AYH sign above it, does not allow one access to the hostel. Hostellers become confused before finding the actual entrance (below). (Dubin, 2002)

In April of 1990, the New York International Hostel accommodated its first guests and has been hosting hostellers and community members for thirteen years since. Although the adaptation was essentially successful and functional, some elements of the original plans had been cut. AYH tried to find a tenant for a restaurant space, but failing that, the space was used for retail. A planned cafeteria was built, but the low demand for its services caused it to be opened only for groups. An off-Broadway theater in the original development plan never materialized.

Also, despite the overall success of the project, problems had been emerging. Not long after it opened the New York hostel, the Metropolitan New York Council of AYH was forced to declare bankruptcy in 1990, after over extending itself financially during the years of the development. In 1995, the investors had completed a five-year re-capture period, which opened the door for a buy-out by the National Council. The National Council of AYH felt that Sybedon had cut corners unnecessarily during development, which led to increased costs at opening. It also was concerned that Sybedon was not paying previously agreed-upon management fees to AYH, and began legal proceedings to recover them. Finally, the property-tax abatement that had been granted was scheduled to end, which would have increased operating costs dramatically unless AYH, exempt as a non-profit organization, owned the property. In 1998, Dick Martyr, then the National Council's executive director, led the buy-out process that ultimately simplified management and increased both the "mission" focus of the property and its returns to AYH.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Nina Janopaul, interview by the author.

After the buy-out, the National Council increased the hostel's capacity from just under 500 beds to over 600. Due to this increase, the ratio of plumbing fixtures to beds was no longer in compliance with standards of the International Youth Hostel Federation, and in 1999, the New York hostel informed IYHF of non-compliance and asked for a relaxation of standards while they commissioned a study. The 2000 study would evaluate the general condition of the building, review hostel standards and design criteria, evaluate hosteller/staff experiences, recommend alternative layouts and renovations, and develop a phasing strategy for new construction. Results of the study, which included information solicited from hostel staff and visitors, highlighted problems with crowded and worn bathrooms and poorly laid-out common spaces, with the latter emerging as the main complaint. Before September 11, 2001, a renovation was being considered to respond to the recent Urban Hostel Design Guideline of 1998, take cues from other International hostels with innovative design and features, and address "green" issues. It was to begin in 2002, prioritizing general building maintenance and the improvement of common rooms, and was to be completed in three phases over five to ten years. Some of the schematic renovation plans from that time show sleeping rooms with ensuite bathrooms, as opposed to common facilities. Unfortunately, the downturn in tourism that followed, and the subsequent economic troubles that plagued the entire nation and the hospitality industry in particular, caused most of the planned work to be placed on hold indefinitely. A re-roofing is planned for 2003-2004, and tuck-pointing of the east façade should occur shortly thereafter.

Conclusions

In this case study, a local redevelopment agency was looking for a positive use for an old building in a neighborhood with potential, and was intrigued by the potential benefits a youth hostel can bring to a re-emerging neighborhood. An historic building was given a viable new use and demolition was avoided. The New York hostel development is one of the most exciting examples of AYH's power to accomplish historic preservation as a by-product of an otherwise unrelated mission statement.

Site Appropriateness. In this thesis, the term *site appropriateness* refers to both a location's ability to fill a need for travelers and to a building's compatibility with the function of a youth hostel. In this case, the need for a large youth hostel in New York City was already established before the Association Residence was considered as a possible site. Since New York sees so many international and domestic visitors, it seemed that this hostel could hardly fail for lack of patronage. The Metropolitan New York Council of AYH would likely have preferred a location closer to midtown museums and theater or to downtown nightlife, but acquisition costs were relatively lower in the economically struggling neighborhood of Manhattan Valley, and although uptown, the hostel would at least still be in the borough of Manhattan. In this location, the hostel is very near to Columbia University and the magnificent St. John the Divine Cathedral, and is walking distance from Central Park and Riverside Park. It is accessible by subway, and its large size permits it to accommodate many more hostellers than a smaller location downtown would.

As far as the appropriateness of the structure itself, the building had been a residence and was originally well divided into small living chambers with service areas and restrooms.

Had the structure been sound and in good condition, the task of adapting the original spaces to suit the hostel would not have been difficult. However, because most of the wood floors had collapsed under the fallen roof structure, the project was essentially a gut-rehab involving a new steel infra-structure. While load-bearing walls and their restrictions on layout were retained, none of the interior partitions are original. Still, one would be hard pressed to find a reuse more compatible with the original program of this structure.

Cultural and Education Value. The New York hostel allows students and travelers to experience the Hunt building and provides a lesson in the history of New York architecture for those with an interest in the topic. The fact that very few buildings designed by Hunt remain in this city may even draw some people to the hostel as an architectural destination.

On another level, the hostel provides a different type of cultural education to visitors from other cities, states and countries. In a description of the benefits that the hostel has brought to the region since its opening, Pam Tice (former executive director of the hostel) remarked that “thousands of young travelers [are able to] visit a real urban neighborhood, perhaps getting a sense of how urban Americans live their lives, and maybe even meeting them.”⁷⁶ These New York hostellers also tend to be more involved in the community than are hostellers in other locations, perhaps due to the leadership at the hostel—travelers participate in the community soup kitchen and in other local volunteer programs.

Acquisition and Finance. Development of the New York International Hostel was a unique experience for all those involved. Usually, a project is deemed successful if it provides maximum economic gain to the developer and to investors. In this case, one of

⁷⁶ Bruner Application, statement by Pam Tice.

AYH's mission-driven goals was to provide overnight accommodation at as low a cost as possible. VRLDC's goal was to provide employment and training opportunities for minority vendors and local residents. PDC's goal was to "save" a landmarked building while keeping overnight costs down. None of these goals are profit-driven; therefore, an inherent conflict existed between maximizing economic benefit and maintaining focus on the mission of the hostel. Ultimately, both goals were slightly compromised; the room rates were marginally higher than intended, and the restoration may not have been as comprehensive as it would have been if more revenue were expected from these room rates. Still, the features of the project most important to its creators were saved and those involved were satisfied with the balance that was struck.

It bears repeating that because of the changes in the tax code in 1986, the financing mechanisms of this development cannot be duplicated in the future. It also bears mention that because of the eventual disagreements with the Sybedon Corporation, AYH chose *not* to use an outside developer when planning the similarly large, complicated project in Chicago. (Ironically, this may not have helped to ward off strife—the Chicago project is still engaged in legal battles after opening in 2000. Perhaps no complex project is without conflict and/or litigation.) Still, in spite of its troubles, the New York International Hostel was the first public-private partnership in AYH history, and the process can be used as a lesson for creative partnerships in future hostel adaptations.

Preservation Goals. A good restoration job does not always require unlimited financial resources, but a large budget never hurts. Since this restoration was planned knowing that the end result would not bring in large profits, especially at beginning, preservation decisions

were balanced with economic ones. For example, some battles were lost for lack of funding, as in the lack of tuck pointing at the facades and the inability to purchase the Tiffany windows back from the museum that housed them. Others were won, as in the presence of solid wood windows throughout.

As previously described, a conflict between ADA and the Landmarks Commission resulted in an oddly placed entrance. Although Landmarks may have declared a victory by rejecting the possibility of retrofitting the main entrance with a lift or ramp, thus saving the historic fabric from permanent alteration, the resulting alternate entrance is not ideal. It lacks the presence of the original main entrance, and makes the visitor feel as if he were entering through the basement.

Unlike in the Sacramento case study, where the old and new are both discernable and harmonious, in New York the effort to combine the two seems more forced. The restoration was able to save and incorporate elements like column capitals and floor mosaics (figures 40, 41) into the new design, which lend some character to the adaptation, yet seem somehow incongruous (figure 42). There are exposed brick arches in the hallways that seem to be “historic” but aren’t; during demolition, AYH developers liked the way they looked bare and asked Larsen to leave them uncovered. The State historic Preservation Office reluctantly agreed, but in truth these arched were not exposed in the original residence (figure 43). Because of code issues that become relevant with this size public space, the required exit signage, emergency lighting, and fire-safety hardware and alarm systems make the historic elements seem to float like objects in a more institutional, contemporary space. Since life-safety requirements are needed, it takes a sensitive eye and



Figures 40, 41. The hostel renovation saved historic elements like these mosaic floors (above) and engaged capital (below). (Dubin, 2002)



Figure 42. The same corridor seen in figure 40 and 41. The historic elements appear diminished by poor lighting and generic signage and hardware. (Dubin, 2002)



Figure 43. Exposed brick arches in hostel corridor. (Dubin, 2002)

perhaps a greater budget to blend these items into a historic restoration. Because of lessons learned in New York, AYH invested in more historically appropriate interior design, including more harmonious signage, in the later Chicago hostel development.

It is useful to note that although the Residence adaptation may fall short of a perfect historic preservation project, the caliber of work that AYH was able to achieve was laudable. This adaptive use project won the Chairman's Award from the New York Landmarks Conservancy in 1990, and in 1993 won a design award from the New York State AIA chapter. The National Trust for Historic Preservation granted AYH their highest national award for the work it has done in total, citing the New York hostel adaptation as the major example of commendable preservation. In the end, the project cost close to \$17 million, perhaps twice what it might have if preservation concerns were not of issue to AYH.⁷⁷

Continuing Viability. Daniel P. Kurtz of the New York City Public Development Corporation was asked, as the hostel was opening to guests, to define what the hostel must be like five years from then if it were to be deemed successful. Kurtz Laid out four criteria: 1) a 70% occupancy rate, 2) maintaining room rates under \$25 per night, 3) the building should show evidence of a high level of maintenance and repair, and 4) physical improvement of the surrounding community should be evident. All four of these criteria were met at the end of the hostel's first five years. Beyond those first five years, at the present time, the rate for a room ranges from \$27-\$35 per night, depending on the room and the season, which is equivalent to the original rate adjusted for inflation. The 70% occupancy rate was typically exceeded until the tourism industry downturn post-September

⁷⁷ William Stevenson, "Hostel with 477 Beds to Open Next Month on Amsterdam," *New York Observer* (October, 1989), 11.

11, 2001. Although detailing and finishes at the hostel appeared worn after thirteen years, this case study has shown that the hostel managers are committed to keeping the hostel clean, well appointed, and up-to-date through routine maintenance and occasional remodelings. As far as Kurtz' fourth criterion is concerned, there is no doubt that the community has been "physically improved." It is intuitive that a clean and functional hostel serves a community better than a dangerous abandoned building, a parking lot, and perhaps better than a luxury residential highrise.

The New York International Hostel project is significant in that it is representative of the "gateway" concept and of a new way of looking at the development of large hostels in the nation's biggest cities. By trading in a philosophy of hostel development that dated back to the origins of hostelling, namely the practice of creating hostels out of small, modest buildings in the countryside, AYH was able to open its eyes to the possibilities inherent in urban hostelling. As late as 1987, an article about the imminent opening of the New York hostel states that, "Budget travelers can find a hostel in every European city, but nearly all of the 275 American Hostels are in rural areas."⁷⁸ The New York hostel and other large urban hostels have only been developing since the 1980s in this country. In the future, this may be the most viable of all hostel types; it supports itself and makes the organization as a whole more viable by carrying some of the financial burden of the less profitable, smaller hostels.

⁷⁸ Stuehlitz, 12.



Figure 44. The Association Residence as it appears today, with the original entrance in the left background and the current hostel entrance in areaway (right foreground). (*Historic Preservation*. January/February, 1992)

Chapter Four

CASE STUDY: PIGEON POINT LIGHT STATION STATE HISTORIC PARK

As indicated by the two previous examples of hostel development, there is no one way to create a hostel from a historic building. Some projects rely on the enthusiasm of local community groups and the municipal government, while others depend on private investment and a boost from federal tax incentives. During the 1970s, with considerable encouragement by AYH, hostel development became a priority in California at the state level when the state senate mandated the creation of low-cost accommodation on the coast in an effort to democratize the expensive coastal overnight vacation experience. The federal government contributed indirectly in the form of three new laws: the National Historic Preservation Act⁷⁹, the National Marine Sanctuaries Act⁸⁰, and the National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act.⁸¹

The two “lighthouse hostels” of AYH’s Golden Gate Council, Pigeon Point Hostel near Pescadero and Montara Point Hostel at Half Moon Bay, have enjoyed particular popularity since they were developed as part of the California State Park System Coastal Hostels Facilities Plan. This case study investigates the Pigeon Point Hostel (figure 45), just

⁷⁹ *National Historic Preservation Act of 1966*, Public Law 89-665, 80 Stat. 915, 16 U.S.C. 470, 89th cong., (October 15, 1966).

⁸⁰ *Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act of 1972*, Public Law 92-532, 86 Stat. 1052 and 1061 (October 23, 1972). Title III of this act is also known as the *National Marine Sanctuaries Act of 1972*.

⁸¹ *Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act*, Public Law 106-355, H.R. 4613, 106th cong., 2nd sess. (October 24, 2000).

All three of these acts have been amended since the original laws were passed.



Figure 45. Pigeon Point Light Station (photo copyright © 1999-2003 by Declan McCullagh).

one of a group of hostels facilitated by a larger initiative that reflected an existing desire for hostels in California. Here, the presence of an historic lighthouse and an obsolete Coast Guard facility in need of a new use dovetailed fortuitously with the desires of AYH, local and state agencies, and the general population of foreign and domestic travelers.

Background

The coast of California is famous for its natural beauty, yet there are times when much of its length in the central and northern portions of the state is enshrouded in fog. During the later part of the nineteenth century, long before radar, lighthouses were an invaluable aspect of a shipping trade that brought goods from the east coast around Cape Horn and sailed them north along the west coast to dock in San Francisco Bay. Before the erection of those light beacons at key warning points, the journey was even more treacherous than it would be later, and many ships lost cargo and crew to the Pacific.

On June 8, 1853, the San Francisco Herald reported,

“We learn that the clipper ship Carrier Pigeon, Captaine Doane, 130 days from Boston, drifted ashore on Monday night [June 6, 1853] about 25 miles south of the heads. Captain Doane came ashore and dispatched three Spaniards on horseback with a note... that the ship had bilged and would be a total loss.”⁸²

The Carrier Pigeon, bearing a carving of a pigeon on its bow, lost 1200 tons of cargo that night after having avoided mishap in the dense fog for several days. Although several other ships wrecked themselves there, like the Sir John Franklin in 1865, the British Coya in 1866, and the Hellespont in 1868, it was the Carrier Pigeon that gave the peninsula its modern

⁸² *San Francisco Herald* (June 8, 1853), reprinted in *Landscapes*, the quarterly newsletter of the Peninsula Open Space Trust, (Summer 2000), 5.

name, Pigeon Point. Shortly after the Carrier Pigeon was lost, the U.S. Coast Guard surveyed the area and recommended a light station either at Pigeon Point or at nearby Año Nuevo, but it would take years before such a device was built. In November of 1868, the San Mateo County Times ran an impassioned appeal to the federal government for the construction of a lighthouse here, stating that,

“no other one place on the Pacific Coast has proved so fatal to navigators... thousands of dollars are monthly expended from the national treasury for matters of much less benefit to the country than would be the construction of a lighthouse at this point.”⁸³

Finally, the U.S. Lighthouse Service agreed to take action and purchased sites both at Pigeon Point and Año Nuevo. The owner of both sites, Loren Coburn, reportedly wanted more but settled for \$10,000 after the government threatened to condemn the land.⁸⁴ At the Pigeon Point site, a foghorn was installed in 1871 until a lighthouse could be provided.

On November 15, 1872, the Pigeon Point Light Station began operation there. Built of 500,000 unreinforced locally-made bricks, it is now the second tallest lighthouse, at 115 feet, on the west coast.⁸⁵ The tower was built with separate outer and inner walls totaling 4½ feet of thickness “with an airspace in between which separates the interior ironworks from corrosion.”⁸⁶ A Victorian house for four families was also constructed to house those who ran the facility (figures 46, 47).

The U.S. Lighthouse Services General Depot in New York created the lighting mechanism as a prefabricated lantern room and shipped it around the Horn. This unit

⁸³ *San Mateo County Times* (Nov. 28, 1868), reprinted in *Landscapes* (Summer, 2000), 5.

⁸⁴ From [rudyalicelighthouse.net](http://www.rudyalicelighthouse.net), a personal interest website about lighthouses. History section available at <http://www.rudyalicelighthouse.net/CallLts/PigeonPt/PigeonPt.htm>.

⁸⁵ *Landscapes*, 6.

⁸⁶ Pigeon Point Tour Pamphlet, available at the Pigeon Point Light Station State Historic Park.



Figure 46. This postcard dates from between 1910-1920. Keeper's dwelling is on the left; water tank building is on the right. (Published by the Pacific novelty Company, San Francisco.)



Figure 47. This 1910 postcard shows the point from the south. The keeper's quarters are on the right. In front of the water tank is a stack of wood used to fuel the steam-powered fog whistle. (Image available at www.pigeonpointlighthouse.org).

contained a five-wick lens originally used at Cape Hatteras in North Carolina⁸⁷; the so-called “Fresnel” lens, named for its inventor Augustine Fresnel, had been manufactured in France and weighed over four tons. Sixteen feet tall and six feet in diameter, it contained over 1000 glass prisms surrounding the light source, focusing that light in order to beam it out over a great distance (figure 48). Though the lens stayed the same, the light source itself varied over time. At first, a series of concentric wicks fueled by lard oil provided nearly 80,000 candlepower; then a kerosene lamp increased the light output; a vaporized oil lamp was then installed; and finally in 1926 a 1000-watt electric bulb (figure 49) replaced the earlier lamps and provided 680,000 candlepower, projecting a beam of light visible for over twenty miles.⁸⁸ Each lighthouse along the coast sent out a distinctive pattern of flashes in order to be positively identified by navigation crews who carried a book of the specific patterns with them. At Pigeon Point, the light flashed every ten seconds, a pattern still used today.

Pigeon Point became more and more trafficked by ships as the Gold Rush of the mid-nineteenth century continued in California. Ships carried pioneers and adventurers up and down the coast, and brought the cargo and building materials for new cities being developed by the population boom. Grey whales moved past the point during migration periods (in fact, the point was earlier known as Punta de las Balenas by the Spaniards), and Portuguese whalers were fond of this spot to hunt their sizeable prey. During prohibition, the secluded coast south of San Francisco became a place for bootleggers to hoist crates

⁸⁷ There is controversy over the origin of the lens. Some say it was used originally at Fort Sumter, but the Commissioner of Lighthouses, George Putnam, wrote in 1924 that, “the lens now at Pigeon Point appears to be the second lens placed in commission at Cape Hatteras Light.” The lens was also rumored to have been confiscated by the Confederates and recaptured subsequently by Federal forces during the Civil War.

⁸⁸ AYH official brochure for III-Pigeon Point.



Figure 48. Close-up of the Fresnel Lens (photo by Ron Powell)



Figure 49. In the 1920s, high-wattage electric bulbs replaced earlier lamps and still continue to light the tower on special occasions (copyright © 1995 - 2003 by Lighthouse Digest®, Inc.)

using Pigeon Point's derrick; keeper Jesse Mygrants was once forced at gunpoint to drive a "rumrunner" to town.⁸⁹

The U.S. Lighthouse Service originally operated the lighthouse in the late nineteenth century and during the first part of the twentieth. The U.S. Coast Guard took over the operation in 1939, erected a radio beacon in 1943, and continued to control the light station until 1972. In 1960, the Victorian keepers' house was demolished and replaced with four small dwellings for Coast Guard employees. By the early 1970s, lighthouse technology had advanced again and an automated 24" Aerobeacon was installed outside the lantern room. The separate Fog Signal Building built in 1902 (figure 50) was no longer projecting sound signals by the mid-1970s, as they had been made obsolete by silent directional technologies like radar.⁹⁰

In 1989, the Loma Prieta earthquake inflicted some minor damage to the tower, which was repaired as part of a 1992 restoration project. The light station was open to the public for the next decade with tours given by volunteer lighthouse enthusiasts. In December of 2002, the tower suffered structural damage when two large sections of brick and iron cornice broke away (figure 51), necessitating the closing of the lighthouse this year while the extent of the damage is being assessed.⁹¹ However, the four Coast Guard residences that were converted in the 1970s to a 52-bed AYH youth hostel remain open.

⁸⁹ rudyalicelighthouse.net

⁹⁰ AYH official brochure for HI-Pigeon Point.

⁹¹ *News Release*, California State Parks (February 13, 2002). Currently, the International Chimney Company is investigating the damage and has estimated a total restoration cost of \$3.5 to 4 million, which will include structural stabilization of all ironwork and masonry, as well as repairs to wood windows and other non-structural elements.



Figure 50. Former fog signal building (Dubin, 2001).



Figure 51. Close-up of damage to the structural iron ring (note missing section, lower right).
(www.rudyalicelighthouse.net)

HI-Pigeon Point has enjoyed a great deal of traffic year round and is especially frequented by those who bike down the coast from the San Francisco area to enjoy the magnificent views from the hostel's cliff-side hot tub.

History of the Hostel

The hostel at Pigeon Point (HI-Pigeon Point) was developed concurrently with HI-Point Montara Lighthouse in 1980-1981. Both lighthouses and their associated turn-of-the-century buildings were preserved and restored by AYH and the California Department of Parks and Recreation, in cooperation with the United States Coast Guard. The history of this effort began in the 1970s when hostelling took hold more vigorously in California than most anywhere else in the country. This was in part because the state is popular with tourists and in part because of the domestic population's penchant for recreation and hostelling.

The 1950s had seen an increased interest in physical fitness throughout the United States, and particularly in California. The environmental movements of the 1960s sparked a portion of the population to seek outdoor recreational experiences. Leisure time increased for many Americans during these years. These effects combined with those of the energy crisis of the early 1970s, which saw many people taking up bicycling as an alternative to filling the automobile tank, largely account for the resultant increase in hostel overnights during this time. California hostels logged 5,375 overnights in 1972, and by 1976 the number had increased to almost 18,000, a 333% increase.⁹²

⁹² AYH *Annual Report of 1977*, 3.

Concurrently, the federal government was passing legislation that would have a profound affect on hostel development in California. In 1972, the National Marine Sanctuaries Act was passed, which called for the Secretary of Commerce to designate and manage marine areas of historical, scientific, or cultural significance. The Act also directed the Secretary to facilitate public and private access to such areas. The state of California responded willingly to enforce this law by creating the California Coastal Commission, which took up the cause of providing access and accommodation to the state's coastline. The CCC's first Executive Director, Michael Fisher, was lobbied extensively by an enthusiastic AYH volunteer from Los Angeles named Joe Chesler, who worked to convince the Coastal Commission that hostelling should be an integral part of their commitment to providing coastal access.⁹³

Also during this period, several other AYH volunteers championed the idea of a hostel system to accompany California's vision of a recreational trail system. These enthusiasts, including Artemas Ginzton of the California Association of Bicycling Organizations, were involved in hiking and biking groups and lobbied at trail conferences for hostel development. Bert Schwarzschild, then Executive Director of the AYH Golden Gate Council, determinedly lobbied the California State Parks Assistant Director, who would eventually be responsible for implementing the coastal hostel pilot plan discussed later in this chapter. Finally, it was under the leadership of Governor Jerry Brown that this extensive lobbying met a receptive audience. Brown was a supporter of parks, recreation, and coastal

⁹³ Much of the information in this chapter (especially the names of individuals involved in the early hostelling effort in California) was provided by Nina Janopaul, former hostel developer for the Golden Gate Council and former Director of Hostel Development for the National Council of AYH.

access; when Pigeon Point opened its hostel in 1981, his Secretary of the Interior would bike to the ceremony to give the celebratory address.

Additionally, the National Historic Preservation Act and the National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act contributed elements that would positively affect the process of developing coastal hostels. The former called for the federal government to “provide leadership in the preservation of historic resources... to administer federally owned resources in a spirit of stewardship... [and to] assist State and local governments to expand their historic preservation activities.”⁹⁴ Furthermore, Section 111 states that, “Any Federal agency shall to the extent practicable, establish and implement alternatives for historic properties, including adaptive use, that are not needed for current or projected agency purposes, and may lease an historic property owned by the agency to any person or organization... if the lease or exchange will adequately insure the preservation of the historic property.” More specifically, the latter Act of the same year authorized the leasing of obsolete lighthouses and stations out to private entities in that same spirit. From a prohibitive standpoint, both acts made it very difficult for historic properties on federal lands to be demolished by neglect.

It was in this climate that a bill was introduced to the state senate that created the California Recreational Trails Act, which had a corresponding section specifying the establishment of a program for youth hostels.⁹⁵ Subsequently, a *Preliminary California Recreational Trails and Hostels Plan*⁹⁶ was developed through the combined efforts of Eckbo,

⁹⁴ NHPA, Section Two, (16 U.S.C. 470-1).

⁹⁵ *California Senate Bill 3594* (Chapter 1461, 1974), Senator Dunlap.

⁹⁶ Mandated by *California Senate Bill 420* (Chapter 265, 1974), Collier Keene, the *State Hostel Facilities Act*.

Dean Austin and Williams, Inc. (*EDAW*), Jones and Stokes Associates, and Economic Research Associates. This report was detailed with regard to the creation of recreation corridors, but provided only general information about a hostel development pilot project intended to place hostels near planned or existing trails. There was to be an emphasis on non-motorized transport; one should be able to hike, bike or ride horseback to the hostel site, but no specific sites were named. Also, there was no corresponding monetary appropriation for such a program.

The financing came two years later in the form of state Assembly Bill 400, which provided \$1.9 million to establish hostel facilities at public park and recreation areas proximal to the coast with the goal of creating low-cost accommodations there.⁹⁷ This bill required the director of the California Department of Parks and Recreation to submit a final plan to the Joint Legislative Budget Committee, listing priority projects and giving more detail as to where and how the individual hostels would be built. When this final plan was submitted, "...existing provisions of law would be amended to authorize the Department to provide hostel facilities at local and regional parks and recreation areas, in addition to units of the State Park System, subject to the requirement that the local or regional public agency having jurisdiction over the park or recreation area agree to care for, maintain, and control the facility at its expense."⁹⁸

With AB 400's authorization of a hostels study, a somewhat visionary State Park planner⁹⁹ was assigned to drive up the coast in search of possible hostel sites. As he drove,

⁹⁷ *California Assembly Bill 400* (Chapter 1440, 1976), Assemblyman McCarthy.

⁹⁸ *AB 400*.

⁹⁹ Perhaps Russell Cahill (Nina Janopaul, interview by the author).

he discovered several decommissioned light stations, owned by the U.S. Coast Guard (a federal agency) and in varying states of disrepair. Although the State had a bias towards developing the hostels on its own land, where it would have been easier to allocate state money to pay rehabilitation costs, the romantic lure of the light stations could not be ignored.

In 1978, then, when the Department of Parks and Recreation issued the report mandated by AB 400 entitled *California State Park System Coast Hostels Facilities Plan*, it was no surprise that two of the five light stations considered had been selected for pilot hostels (figure 52).¹⁰⁰ The detailed plan proposed to establish two “pilot chains”, one easily accessed from the San Francisco Bay Area, the other from Los Angeles, Orange County, and San Diego. Once established, these pilot chains were to be incorporated into one comprehensive chain of hostels stretching along the coast from Oregon to Mexico, to be located in state parks, U.S. Coast Guard sites, and city or county parks, with the long-term goal of hostel facilities associated with every major recreation corridor in California. (If the entire chain had been realized as envisioned in this 1978 plan, it is almost certain that many travelers would utilize the chain in sequence. For example, during the 1976 “Bikecentennial”, cyclists utilized rudimentary bike camps provided by CALTRANS in order

¹⁰⁰ Prepared by the State of California – The Resources Agency, Department of Parks and Recreation (Russell Cahill, Director). The report was produced by the Hostel Planning Citizen’s Advisory Committee, which was intended to represent the interests of a wide range of potential users and which included Sim van der Ryn (State Architect of California), Olive Meyer (Sierra Club), Artemas Ginzton (California Association of Bicycling Organizations), Bill Black (Outdoor Adventures), Lyman Moore (AYH), Charlotte Melville (League of California Cities), and Chris Jarvi (County Supervisor’s Association of California). The report was prepared by DeRoy Jensen (Assistant Landscape Architect, Hostel Project Manager) under the supervision of Lon Spharler (Chief of the State Planning Division) and Tom Crandall (Supervisor, State Park System Planning Section).

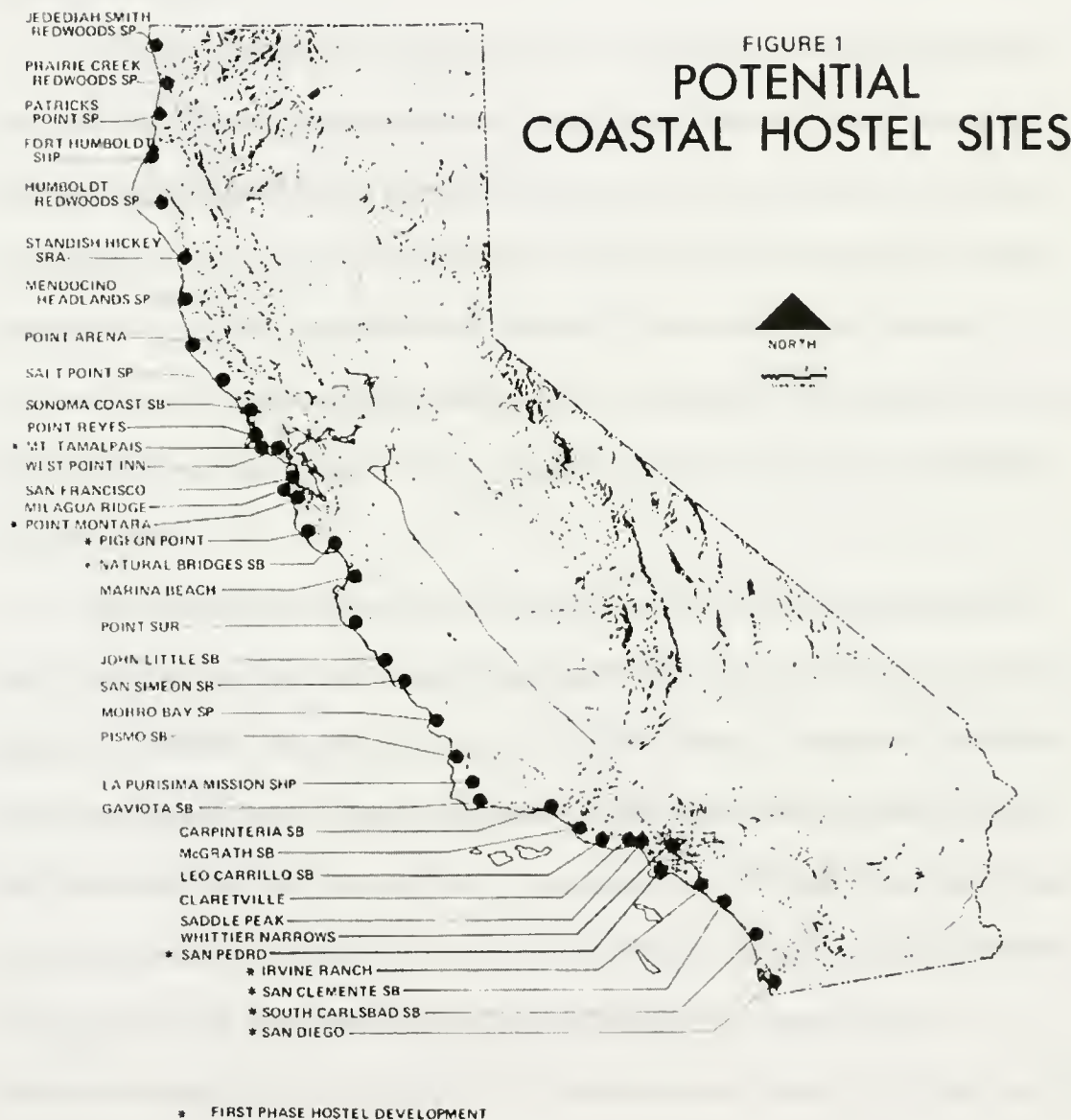


Figure 52. A diagram of hostel possibilities on the California coast (those starred are the nine chosen for the two initial pilot studies).

to tour the length of the coast. The camps were extremely popular and continued to be the following year. If the simple camps had instead been hostels, the average person would be even more likely to bike a section of the coast without the burden of transporting tents and cooking equipment.)

The idea of the “loop”, a chain of hostels located within walking or biking distance from each other allowing a hosteller several days of recreation, dates back to Schirrmann’s ideas and to the original 1930s AYH mission statement. The *Coast Hostels Plan* enumerated four qualities that hostel sites should possess—each site “should have the greatest scenic, *historic*, cultural, and recreational potential [possible].”¹⁰¹ As seen in AYH’s mission statement, historic preservation per se may not be the Department of Parks and Recreation’s primary goal in creating low-cost coastal accommodations, but is present in a short list of secondary goals.

The northern pilot chain was to consist of four hostels at Mount Tamalpais State Park, Point Montara State Park, Pigeon Point Light Station State Historic Park, and Natural Bridges State Beach. The southern chain was to include hostels at San Pedro City Park, the Irvine Coast (Moro Canyon), San Clemente State Beach, South Carlsbad State Beach, and Old Town San Diego State Historic Park. The purpose of establishing these smaller loops was to demonstrate how Californians (and other travelers) would utilize the hostel facilities, and to give the DPR experience in managing the hostels before committing to a management model for a state-wide chain. The locations were chosen to be within one day’s cycling distance from each other and from major population centers. Five of the nine

¹⁰¹ *Coast Hostels Plan*, 9.

(Mount Tamalpais, Montara Point, Pigeon Point, San Pedro and Old Town San Diego) were to be created from existing structures, and the balance was to be constructed new. Montara and Pigeon Points would have hostels created from former Coast Guard facilities at historic lighthouses, and the other three sites would offer hostels located on locally operated park land or on land being acquired by the state.

The 1978 Plan also stated, “to avoid the high cost of new construction, existing buildings will be used whenever they are available and can be modified and converted to hostel use.”¹⁰² However, the budgets presented in the report evidence something different. Although the Plan estimates new hostel construction costs at approximately \$5,000 per bed (as in the hostels planned for South Carlsbad and San Clemente) and rehab-hostel construction (as in Pigeon Point and Montara Point) at an average of half that price, an involved restoration like the one planned for the historic Robinson-Rose Boarding House in Old Town San Diego would cost more per bed than new construction (figure 53). The framers of the *Coast Hostels Plan* did not stress the potential for rehabilitations to outcost new construction—instinctively, they knew that a historic hostel was a superior experience for travelers than a new one, but since they needed an economic reason to promote historic adaptive use, they discussed reuse as a money-saving device. (Ironically, in the initial round of development that followed this study, Pigeon Point and Montara Point exceeded projected costs for rehabilitation by enough to discourage the Golden Gate Council from lobbying for additional sites.)

¹⁰² *Coast Hostels Plan*, 9.

<i>Location</i>	<i>Construction type</i>	<i># Beds</i>	<i>Cost of construction</i>
San Diego	Rehab	60	\$330,000
South Carlsbad	New	40	\$230,000
San Clemente	New	40	\$230,000
Irvine/Moro	New	40	\$230,000
San Pedro	Rehab	100	\$100,000
Natural Bridges	New	80	\$380,000
Pigeon Point	Rehab	50	\$100,000
Point Montara	Rehab	50	\$150,000
Mount Tamalpais [†]	Rehab	40	\$50,000

[†]This hostel was designated as a “primitive” hostel between “regular” hostels at Point Reyes and Steiner Street in San Francisco.

Figure 53. Table of proposed pilot hostels.

Whatever the case, the Plan called for reuse of obsolete buildings: “existing buildings will be used as hostel sites whenever this use is compatible with surrounding land use and it is economically feasible to renovate them.”¹⁰³ Continuing, it states that, “adaptable buildings in parks and obtainable properties (light station residences, etc.) have been studied to evaluate their hostel potential. To hasten the implementation process, structures now available will be given high development priorities.”¹⁰⁴ For this reason, because the facilities had been declared surplus federal properties and because the 12th District of the U.S. Coast Guard quickly approved their reuse, the light stations at Point Montara and Pigeon Point were developed first, before any of the others in the pilot study.

At Pigeon Point (as well as at Montara), the development arrangement was somewhat unorthodox. Although the lighthouse was decommissioned and the U.S. Coast

¹⁰³ *Coast Hostels Plan*, 13.

¹⁰⁴ *Coast Hostels Plan*, 14.

<i>Location</i>	<i>Construction type</i>	<i># Beds</i>	<i>Cost of construction</i>
San Diego	Rehab	60	\$330,000
South Carlsbad	New	40	\$230,000
San Clemente	New	40	\$230,000
Irvine/Moro	New	40	\$230,000
San Pedro	Rehab	100	\$100,000
Natural Bridges	New	80	\$380,000
Pigeon Point	Rehab	50	\$100,000
Point Montara	Rehab	50	\$150,000
Mount Tamalpais [†]	Rehab	40	\$50,000

[†]This hostel was designated as a “primitive” hostel between “regular” hostels at Point Reyes and Steiner Street in San Francisco.

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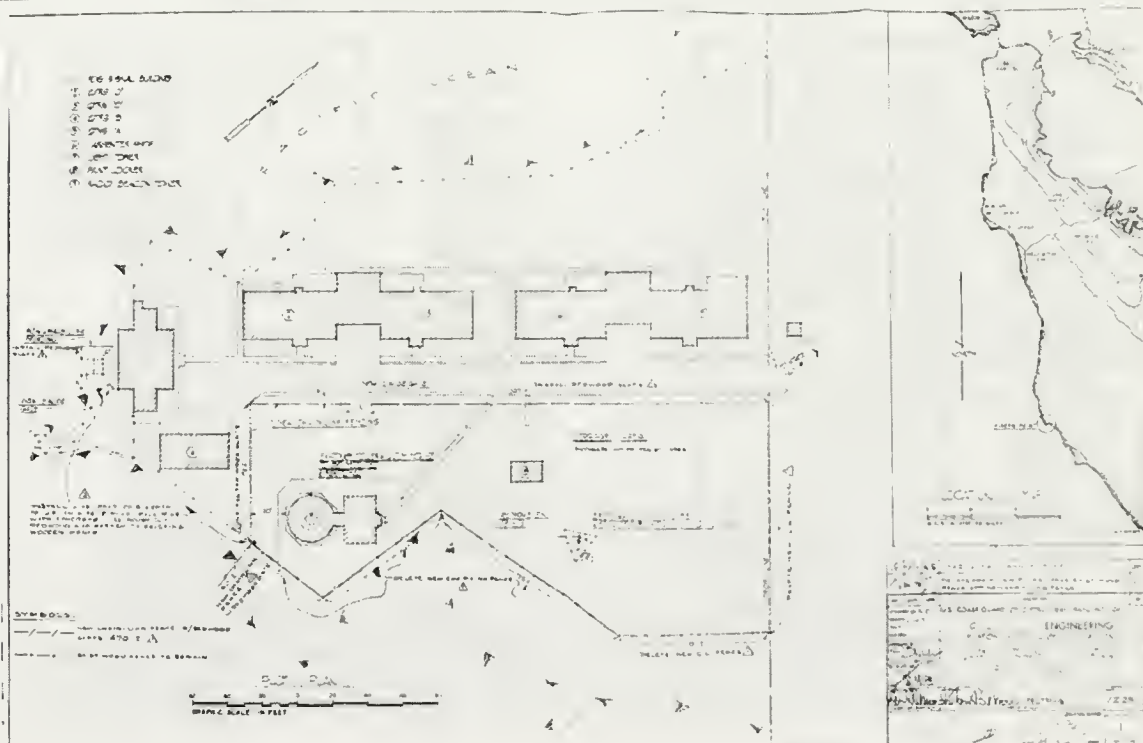
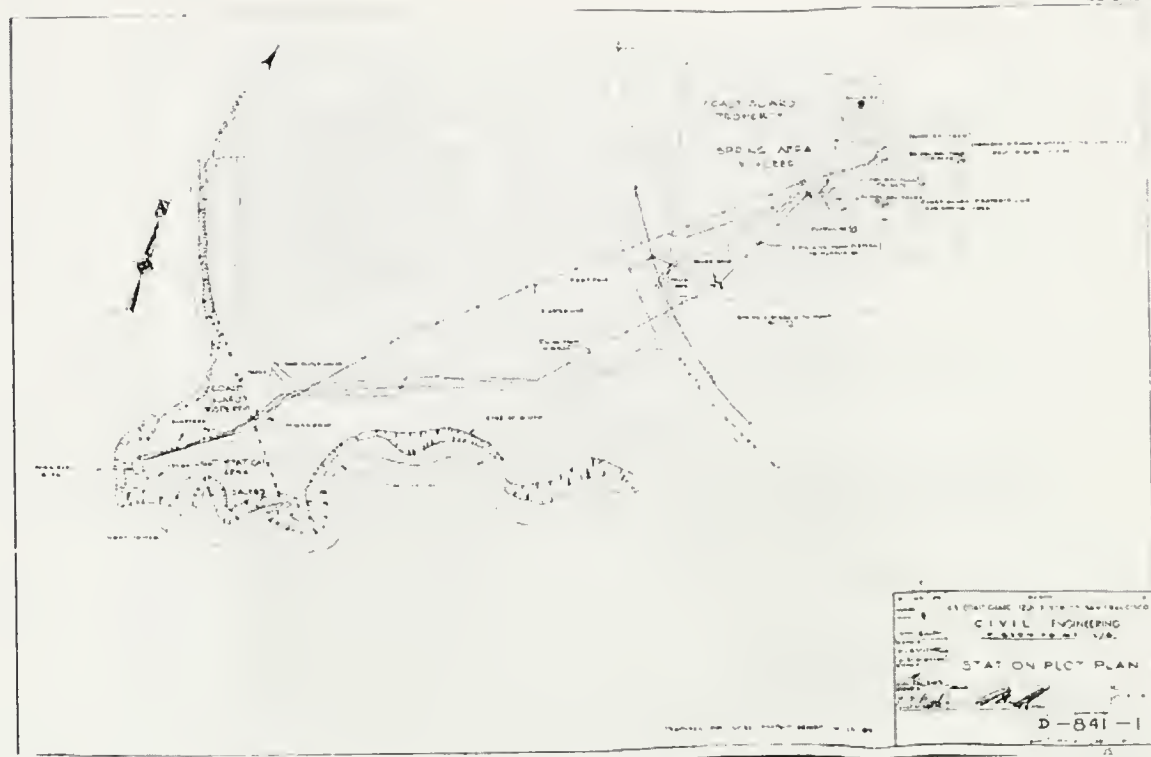
¹⁰³ *Coast Hostels Plan*, 13.

¹⁰⁴ *Coast Hostels Plan*, 14.

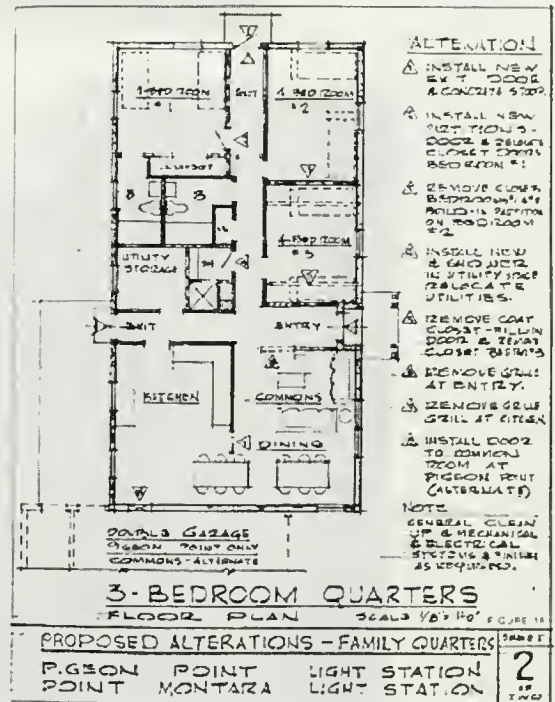
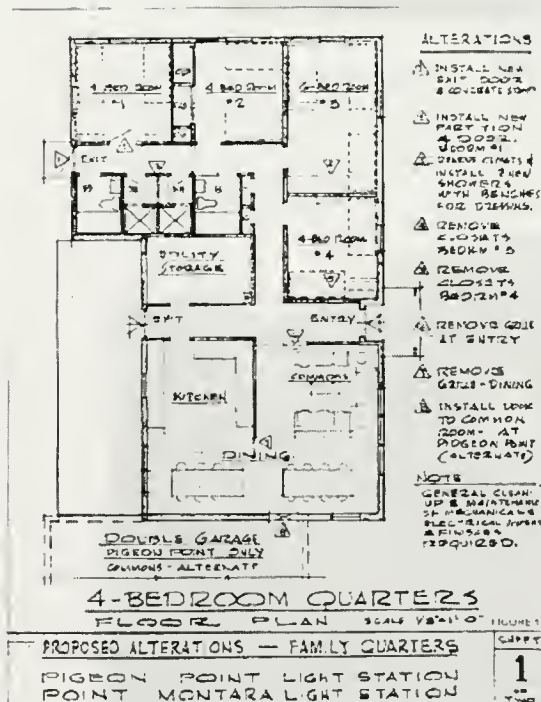
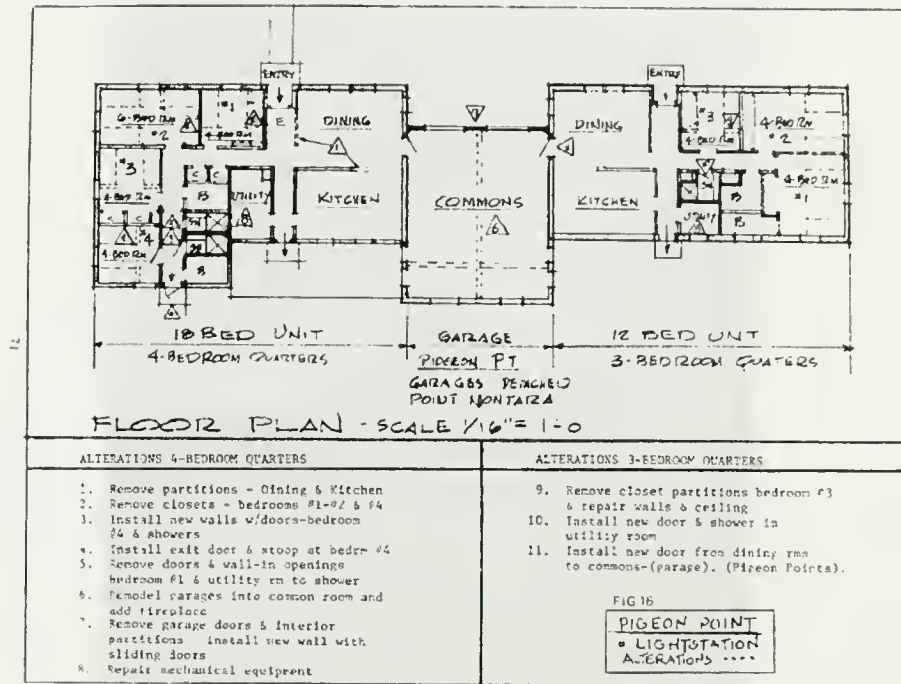
Guard granted the State permission to develop the site, the land still belonged to the federal government as did the structures on it. Barbara Wein, Executive Director of the GGC following Schwarzschild, lobbied for long-term leases on both properties from the USCG to the California DPR but at the time of development the properties were only secured by short-term lease. Essentially, the State of California put hundreds of thousands of dollars (at least \$300,000, if not more) into rehabilitating structures that they did not own. This act was a demonstration of faith that might not have happened at all if other ingredients had not been present—namely, the serendipitous convergence of a sympathetic administrator at the USCG, state and federal legislation mandating public access to the coast, several underused light stations, and historic preservation laws that prevented those structures from being demolished.

Building Description

In the previous two case studies, this section was used to discuss renovations to the historic structure in question. In this case, the hostel's historic significance is primarily due to the lighthouse tower and in the site itself, and less in the structures that house the hostel dormitories—the former Coast Guard housing units. The original Victorian light keeper's house was demolished to make room for four single-story barracks in 1960. Although the hostel would have been more “historic” had the dorm been situated in the original residence, the presence of the nearly forty-year-old barracks conveys a history of its own. The barracks, as they have been adapted slightly for use as a hostel, are commodious and required little in the way of drastic rehabilitation (figures 54-58).



Figures 54, 55. Site plan of Pigeon Point showing the tower, former Coastguard barracks, and peripheral buildings.



Figures 56-58. Plans for a simple renovation of the barracks into dorm space for the hostel.



Figures 59, 60. The hostel today: tower (above) and dormitories (below). (Dubin, 2002)

Although the lighthouse tower is not used for dormitories, the presence of the easily adapted barracks adjacent to it brings in a stream of visitors to the tower itself. Before it was damaged at the end of 2002, it was open to the public for tours run by enthusiastic docents. It is possible that the tower is more frequently visited as a result of the youth hostel at the site than it would have been otherwise.

Conclusions

Today, there are 22 AYH-affiliated hostels in California. The complete chain of 37 hostels that was envisioned by creators of the ambitious Coast Hostels Plan never materialized, but the existing hostels developed during the 1970s and 1980s are still well attended.

Site Appropriateness. As a measure of “site appropriateness”, it is interesting to point out that not only do California hostels provide low-cost access to the coast, but in some locations, a hostel may be the *best* accommodations available. HI-Marin Headlands is closer to outdoor recreation areas than hotels in San Francisco, and HI-Point Reyes is as close as one can stay to the beach at Point Reyes. In the case of HI-Pigeon Point, the hostel occupies much-coveted land where private developers of Oceanside hotels have tried to plan new construction. In May of 2000, the Peninsula Open Space Trust purchased the land around Pigeon Point State Historic Park for \$2.65 million for the sole purpose of removing an inn under construction and reversing the development of Whaler’s Cove (figure 61). With this purchase, POST succeeded in preventing the first commercial development west of Highway 1 between Santa Cruz and Half Moon Bay. Therefore, HI-Pigeon Point is still



Figure 61. The Lighthouse Inn with construction halted. Soon, the Peninsula Open Space Trust will remove the structures and restore the landscape at Whaler's Cove. (POST, 2002)

the only game in town; it provides coastal accommodations at a reasonable cost in re-used historic buildings *without* threatening the natural landscape that POST and the community at large seek to preserve. The dorm facilities are simple but clean and practical, and the adaptation of Coast Guard barracks to hostel dorms was a natural fit.

Cultural and Educational Value. The lighthouse hostels on the California coast provide visitors with an opportunity to tour a piece of American history. The proximity of the hostel to the lighthouse tower affords the opportunity for any hosteller who wishes to a chance to see the structure and the magnificent Fresnel lens inside.

Most hostellers at this location are domestic, however. Perhaps this is due to the difficulty of getting to the hostel—since it isn't located in a big city, one must go out of one's way to get there. It is possible, however to get to the hostel via public transportation, so many international travelers do manage the trip. Domestic traffic from the San Francisco Bay area via bicycle is common, since the hostel has a reputation for its cliff-side hot tub, and locals tend to make reservations well in advance to secure one of two private rooms for a weekend getaway.

Acquisition and Funding. Pigeon Point has something in common with the New York project: neither development might have occurred if proposed today. Even though the hostel at Pigeon Point has been very well attended for the past twenty years, ongoing hostel development in California has been de-emphasized for a number of reasons. The initial enthusiasm for hostels did not exactly die, but those involved moved on to other projects. Jerry Brown's administration was followed by sixteen years of Republican governors and subsequent shrinking public agency budgets; even successful hostels are often not a large

source of revenue for park facilities. Furthermore, the costs of retrofitting historic buildings like these have grown as permitting requirements have become more stringent. In the words of Barbara Wein, “The biggest obstacle is finding the financial resources for developing new hostels. There is no question that prime locations exist.”¹⁰⁵

In 1980, the State of California was willing to put over \$300,000 into two lighthouse sites that they did not own. Today, the process of finding new uses for structures like these would likely result in different choices despite the success of past projects.

Preservation Goals. The hostel at Pigeon Point did not directly contribute to the physical preservation of the lighthouse tower and fog signal building, but rather indirectly brought attention to those structures through the renovation of the adjacent barracks. Before the hostel project, the site was unused and vandalized; today it is vibrant with activity.

Since the opening of HI-Pigeon Point, other California groups have worked with AYH to preserve historic sites by contributing expertise, financial assistance, and labor. The California Coastal Conservancy provided funding and technical assistance at the restored Louis DeMartin House that is now HI-Redwood National Park and at the Civil War era barracks that is now HI-Marin Headlands. When the Carmelita Cottages, a cluster of small Victorian dwellings donated by Lottie Thompson Sly, were to be converted, the Coastal Conservancy provided \$410,000 in funding. YouthWorks of Santa Cruz, a non-profit group that helps at-risk teenagers by exposing them to useful skills, provided willing hands towards physically restoring the cottages.

¹⁰⁵ *California Coast and Ocean* (Winter 1997-98), 1.

Continuing Viability. Viability of the current roster of California coastal hostels has been aided by the popularity of hostelling in California. Many visitors travel by bicycle down the coast to visit Pigeon Point as a destination. Since vacancy rates have not been high even in the wake of September 11, 2001, and the subsequent recession, the future of these hostels looks bright.

In 2002, *Parade* magazine featured several lighthouses (with Pigeon Point on the cover) under the caption “Here’s your chance to own your own lighthouse.”¹⁰⁶ In the second installment of the National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Program, twenty lighthouses were to be given away to individuals or organizations that could prove an ability to preserve and maintain them. Through this program, the U.S. Coast Guard planned to relinquish ownership of Pigeon Point. The author was surprised to see the lighthouse offered up for the taking and wondered how the transfer of ownership would affect the hostel facility.

The State of California is currently involved in an application process to gain ownership of the property. According to Nelson Morosini, the state park ranger in charge of the site, there are no other applicants (that he is aware of) for ownership of this particular property.¹⁰⁷ Morosini speculated that even if there were to be other interested parties, no other applicant would have the financial resources to take on the burden of repair work to the tower. He anticipated a smooth transition from ownership by the Coast Guard to ownership by the state, and felt that this change would have little or no affect on the operation of the hostel.

¹⁰⁶ *Parade* (Sunday, September 29, 2002), 1.

¹⁰⁷ Nelson Morosini, interview by the author (April 26, 2003).



Figure 62. Plaque commemorating the light station's designation as "California Registered Historical Landmark No. 930."

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis illustrates three examples of adaptive use projects developed by AYH over the last twenty-five years. To look only at these examples, one would see evidence of a highly motivated organization that is able to extract enthusiasm and cooperation from other groups (both private and public) in order to meet its goals. This is accurate, yet throughout the process of developing these hostels, AYH struggled. In Sacramento, despite the resolution of the issue in a relatively happy ending, the third move of the Llewellyn Williams mansion cost taxpayers a great deal of money and left city officials with a still-throbbing headache. Litigation became an issue in the ultimate disharmony with the Sybedon Corporation in New York, resulting in the transfer of the New York hostel's title to AYH and the dissolution of the local Metropolitan New York Council. During the development of the lighthouse hostels, AYH pushed the various government entities at every step of the way to help them consider hostels as a public good. In other words, hostel development is hard work, requiring financial and emotional resources.

What, then, is the future of AYH and the preservation of historic structures through adaptive use hostel projects? To answer this question, one must look objectively at the state of the organization now. Nina Janopaul, former hostel developer for the Golden Gate Council and later Director of Hostel Development with the national council, shed light on current issues within AYH. She believes that hostel development is no longer a priority for AYH for three main reasons, summarized here:

1. The current economy has hit the organization very hard. After “9/11”, occupancy rates at the gateway breadwinner hostels dropped dramatically. Operating a large hostel involves high fixed costs (mortgage, utilities, 24-hour staffing) and means that there is little ability to downsize when usage declines, even temporarily. For the next few years, AYH is focused on just surviving.
2. AYH never became adequately good at fundraising. Real estate development on a large scale requires capital, and because of the grassroots nature of the organization and perhaps the nature of hostelling itself, AYH was never able to cultivate the high profile that major funders need for long-term investment. (Short-term fundraising success was achieved in both New York and the later Chicago project, but couldn’t be sustained.)
3. The organization has too broad a sense to its mission to focus its resources effectively. Varied activities not stressed in this paper are part of the organization’s mission, too: AYH runs biking clubs, operates outreach programs in communities, cultivates travel clubs, sells memberships to travel abroad, etc. Hostel development competes against these other programs, and the focus tends to be cyclic—almost no hostel development happened during the 1960s and 70s, followed by a bloom of development during the 80s and 90s, followed by a dormant period. Janopaul claims, “Development is expensive and scary and tough. I think they need a little rest.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ Nina Janopaul, interview by the author.

These three concepts indicate a shift in emphasis away from the development of historic hostels, at least for the time being. There have been other conceptual changes in the hostel development mechanism that have put a halt to further adaptations. All three case studies presented in this paper were successful despite the unlikelihood that they could be repeated in today's economic and political climate. Why and how have the mechanisms changed?

First, laws have changed since the 1970s. On the positive side, the National Historic Preservation Act and other related legislation has made it more difficult for federal and state agencies to demolish historic structures by intent or by neglect. But, although AYH benefited during the years immediately following the new law, Janopaul surmises that these same agencies have grown savvier. As parks started looking for new revenue sources, they found they could lease their historic properties and other inholdings as concession operations and charge rent, as opposed to allowing AYH to develop them without charging a fee. High-end inns are more profitable than hostels, even though they may serve fewer people, and therefore can often do even more with the structures and maintain them better. Today, both government and private enterprise have greater experience in other more lucrative uses for historic properties. (Janopaul notes that "of course, some are less [lucrative], like house museums, which are notorious for needing subsidy...")

Additional laws were passed, including the Tax Reform Act of 1986, which made it slightly more cumbersome to use historic tax credits on small projects. AYH's personnel costs rose after the 1980s when new labor law interpretations came into effect. Before that, much of AYH's labor force was quasi-volunteer, and a labor law study it commissioned

showed that it would become unfeasible to utilize this force efficiently in the future. Within the organization, AYH and the IYHF grew more stringent in their own standards, changing their requirements regarding operating hours and staffing minimums. Under the new standards, hostels with fewer than forty beds were generally not self-supporting. This reduced the number of historic buildings that AYH could consider developing in the future causing the organization to rethink the way it operated its current holding of small hostels.

As an example, the Pennsylvania State Parks system went through a very “pro-hostel” period under the leadership of Bill Forrey in the 1970s. During this time, the State Parks released many historic properties to AYH to develop as hostels for free, and even paid for major maintenance on the structures. Today, hostels like the one at Tyler State Park are struggling because they accommodate fewer than forty beds and are not self-supporting. This dilemma has caused several of these operations to close (like the Delaware Water Gap hostel, the Poconos hostel, and, temporarily, the hostel at Bowmansville—the oldest continually operated hostel in the country). Recently, AYH commissioned a feasibility study to plan for the future of these smaller “network” hostels, but the general feeling is that “40” is the magic number and any hostel with less than forty beds will not be viable.

In summary, AYH faces the future with a restrained attitude towards the development of historic structures as hostels. If and when the general economy improves and hostel development becomes a goal again, it is likely that the older mission of providing accommodations away from the inner city will be thoroughly eclipsed by a new mission—one of providing accommodations in larger, self-supporting hostels within cities. The author hopes that AYH can find a way to continue the operation of the smaller hostels that have

been so charming, welcoming and educational to generations of travelers. Ironically, AYH is trapped between two organizational modes: it must choose between accepting itself as a low-profile, grassroots group and becoming an economically savvy corporation, developing larger projects while leaving behind, for better or worse, its original mission.

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INDEX

A

Año Nuevo, 87
 Architectural League of New York, 60
 Association Residence for Respectable Aged Indigent
 Females, 56, 57, 60, 61, 65, 75, 121
 Association Residence for Women, 60
 Astor, John Jacob, 59
 AYII mission statement, 53, 75, 99

B

Babson, Seth, 25, 49
 Baker, Paul, 61
 Benvenuti, Joe, 29, 35
 Biesanz, John Berry, xiii, xiv, 7, 9, 21, 117, 121
 Bikecentennial, 97
 Bowmansville, viii, 19, 115
 Brown, Governor Jerry, 94, 108

C

California Coastal Commission, 94
 California Coastal Conservancy, 109
 California Department of Parks and Recreation, 93, 96
 California Governor's Mansion, 49
 California Recreational Trails and Hostels Plan, 95
 California State Park System Coast Hostels Facilities
 Plan, 97, 99, 100, 101, 106
 California State Railroad Museum, 48
 Carmelita Cottages, 109
 Carnegie Corporation, 12, 20, 21
 Chesler, Joe, 94
 Clark and Booth Funeral Home, 28
 Coburn, Loren, 87
 Coburn, Oliver, iii, 7
 Crocker Mansion, 25

D

Doane, Captain John, 86

E

Ecole des Beaux-Arts, 57
 Economic Research Associates, 96
 EDAW, 96

F

Fisher, Michael, 94
 Forrey, Bill, 115
 Fort Mason, 55
 Fresnel, Augustine, 89, 108
 Furness, Frank, 57

G

Gallatin, Albert, 49
 Gambrill, Charles, 57
 gateway hostels, 55, 56, 82, 113
 Gilded Age, 57
 Ginzton, Artemas, 94, 97
 Gold Rush, 25, 89
 Golden Gate Council, xv, 30, 31, 32, 33, 52, 53, 84,
 94, 100, 102, 112
 Goodell, Nathaniel, 49

H

Haynes, Steve, xii, 24, 28, 33, 47, 53, 54, 122
 Heilbron House, 49
 HI-USA, xiv
 Holmes, A.M. and Mory, 28, 29
 Horse-Shoe trail, 17
 Hostelling in Europe, v, x, 1, 6, 7, 8, 14, 22, 119
 Bad Godesberg, 16
 Britain, viii, x, 9, 10, 11, 18, 57, 117
 YHA, 7
 Castle Altena, ii, viii, 3, 4, 5, 6
 Catchpool, Jack, 12, 13, 14, 17, 20
 Chateau de Brolles, 12
 Czechoslovakia, 11
 Denmark, 11, 12
 Dutch Youth Hostel Movement, iii, 14
 Fontainbleau, 12
 France, x, 9, 11, 14, 59, 89
 Germany, v, 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 16
 Hauptausschuss für Jugendherbergen, 6
 Jugendbewegung, 1
 Jugendherbergen, 4, 6, 117
 National Socialism, 7
 Nette School, 3, 4
 Reichjugendführung, 7
 Verbund für Deutsche Jugendherbergen, 7
 Wandervögel, 1, 121
 Holland, viii, 9, 14, 15, 16, 119, 120
 Houghton Mill, viii, 10
 Munker, William, 6, 7

Norway, 11, 13, 14
 Arnjot, Harold, 11
 Poland, 11
 Rucksack, 12
 Scandinavia, 11
 Schirrmann, Richard, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 16, 99, 121
 YHIA, 9, 10, 12, 14
 Hunt, Richard Morris, 56, 57, 59, 60, 61, 64, 76, 118, 120, 121

I

International Work Party, viii, 11, 12, 13, 15
 International Youth Hostel Federation, 12, 14, 74, 115, 117
 Irvine Coast (Moro Canyon), 99, 101
 Isabel and Monroe Smith, ii, 14, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21

J

J. Neely Johnson House, 49
 Janopaul, Nina, xii, 70, 73, 94, 96, 112, 113, 114, 122
 Jones and Stokes Associates, 96

K

Kurtz, Daniel P., 81

L

Larsen Associates, 67, 70, 78
 Lathe, Roger, 53
 Legislation
 Americans with Disabilities Act, 71, 78
 California Recreational Trails Act, 95
 National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act, 84, 95
 National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Program, 110
 National Historic Preservation Act, 84, 95, 114
 National Marine Sanctuaries Act, 84, 94
 Tax Act of 1986, 66, 114
 Leland Stanford Mansion, 49
 Lewis, Bertram, 65, 66
 lighthouses, v, xvi, 84, 86, 87, 89, 91, 101, 102, 106, 108, 109, 110, 112
 Littleton, MA, xi
 Louis DeMartin House, 109

M

Manhattan Valley, 56, 61, 64, 75, 118
 Marin Headlands, 106, 109
 Martyr, Dick, 73
 Mays, James O'Donald, xiii, 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 11, 17, 118

McBride, Thomas J., 30
 McCabe, Bob, 33, 35, 41
 Metropolitan Museum of Art, 57
 Metropolitan New York Council, 73, 75, 112
 Montara Point, 84, 100
 Morosini, Nelson, 110, 122
 Mount Tamalpais State Park, 99, 101
 Munro, Charles, 28

N

National Register of Historic Places, 49, 51, 60, 71
 National Trust for Historic Preservation, 32, 47, 60, 81
 Natural Bridges State Beach, 99, 101
 network hostels, xiii, xv, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 17, 29, 60, 115, 118
 New York International Hostel, 56, 66, 67, 73, 76, 77, 82
 New York Landmarks Commission, 56, 60, 71, 78
 Northfield, viii, 17, 18, 117

O

Old Sacramento, 25, 48
 Old Town San Diego State Historic Park, 99, 100

P

Peninsula Open Space Trust, 86, 106, 108, 121
 Pigeon Point, 84, 87, 89, 91, 93, 95, 99, 100, 101, 106, 108, 109, 110, 122
 Carrier Pigeon, 86
 Fog Signal Building, 91
 Punta de las Balenas, 89
 Pioneer Milling Company, 25
 Post, George, 57

R

Redwood National Park, 109
 Rich, Charles A., 59
 Robinson-Rose Boarding House, 100
 Roosevelt, Eleanor and Franklin, 20

S

Sage, Mrs. Russell, 59
 San Clemente State Beach, 99
 San Pedro City Park, 99
 Schwarzschild, Bert, 94, 102
 Seadler, James, 25
 Serna, Joe, 31
 South Carlsbad State Beach, 99
 Stanford, Leland, 25, 49, 118
 Statue of Liberty, 57
 Stern, Robert A. M., 60

Stuyvesant, Peter, 59
Sybedon Corporation, 64, 65, 66, 73, 77, 112

T

The University Club, 28
Tice, Pam, 63, 76
Tyler State Park, 115

U

U.S. Coast Guard, xvi, 13, 86, 87, 91, 93, 97, 100,
101, 102, 108, 110
U.S. Lighthouse Service, 87, 91
Urban Development Action Grant, 65

V

Valley Restoration Local Development Corporation,
61, 63, 64, 65, 67, 77
van Brunt, Henry, 57
Van Voorhies Investment Company, 28
Vanderbilt, William Henry, 57

W

Ware, William, 57
Warren, Bacil B., ii, xiii, xiv, 3, 4, 11, 16, 17, 18, 119
Wein, Barbara, 30, 102, 109
Weir, Lebert H., xiii, xiv, 6, 117, 119
Williams, Llewellyn, 25, 49, 52, 112
World War I, 8, 13
World War II, 8, 13

Y

Yardley, H. Edward, 28, 29
Yee, Jimmie, 32, 33, 35

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